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TRAVELING THROUGH TEXT:
MESSAGE AND METHOD IN
LATE MEDIEVAL PILGRIMAGE
ACCOUNTS

by

Elka Weber

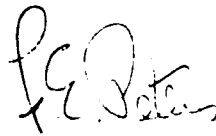
A dissertation submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of

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New York University

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A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'F.E. Peters', is written above a horizontal line.

F.E. Peters

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DEDICATION

To Eli - for everything, with everything

ABSTRACT

A survey of Muslim, Christian and Jewish pilgrim accounts from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries shows methods and themes common to most medieval writing about religious travel. Most accounts are self-conscious; all aim to shape the reader's sense of self. Some accounts are distant; others directly ask for reader participation, but all engage the reader in some way. All choose and present their information in such a way as to distinguish the writer and reader from others.

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INTRODUCTION

The significance of medieval religious travel writing

Travel writing as a genre has attracted a significant amount of scholarly attention in recent years. Much of this is a response to Edward Said's assertion that the Orient has been understood through "European imaginative geography"¹ rather than through objective realities. According to Said, this method of understanding feeds (and is in turn nourished by) colonialism, by creating a perpetual imbalance of power.

Studying travel writing challenges Said by looking at a category of writing to which he gives little notice. Travel writing is a broad genre, covering everything from the hurriedly dashed postcard to finely crafted essays. But despite the diversity of forms, all travel writing has something in common. The genre is created by the tension between the inner and outer worlds of the observer, by the challenge of reducing the world to text. Literary theorists might want to see the whole world as text, and studies of travel writing are full of people 'reading' and

¹ Edward Said, Orientalism, New York: Vintage Books, 1979, p.57. The response is articulated in the introduction to James Duncan and Derek Gergory, eds., Writes of Passage: reading travel writing, Routledge: London and New York, 1999.

'scripting' the places they visit. But the metaphor of world as text is actually at its least useful in travel writing. This is the genre in which writers allow their readers to see the process of textualization. And what the readers learn is that some things simply cannot be known through reading.

Travel writing is a relatively transparent form. It is the literary equivalent of the Pompidou center in Paris, with its structural and maintenance systems visible to outsiders. The travel writer does not simply produce writing; he is a visible participant in it. Because travelers are part of their writing, the accounts they generate provide fertile ground for watching the relationship between the observer and the observed. This is especially true because often the observer comes from a very different society from the one he visits. Not only does he have the time and money to travel, but chances are he comes from a society that values scientific assessment of differences. These values do not correspond directly with wealth. Some societies were rich and powerful but totally unconcerned with the world around them. Marco Polo probably thought he came from one of the richest areas of the world, but was awed by the wealth of China.² Even relatively poor countries, like medieval Germany, might produce large numbers of travelers.

It would be wrong to think of the observed as utterly passive. Sometimes the travelers describe their observations of the locals in the same way as the locals themselves do. And sometimes the visited adopt the visitors' characterizations of them and act and represent themselves accordingly.³ This adoption of outside perception explains why a fourth-century bishop tells visitors to the Dead Sea region that there is no physical trace of Lot's wife as a pillar of salt, but medieval tour guides are more than willing to show visitors Lot's wife in her saline form.⁴

The history of travel literature is intimately bound up with colonialism. The genre of "medieval pilgrimage accounts" was first born as an independent body of writing at the height of the British empire. In the late nineteenth century, translating and editing the writings of medieval Europeans was something of an "international scholarly craze."⁵ The Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, whose translations are used throughout this study, reflects the interests and goals of

² Steve Clark, ed., Travel Writing & Empire: Postcolonial theory in transit, London; New York: Zed Books, 1999, pp.10-11.

³ Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, London: Routledge 1992, pp.6-7.

⁴ Some Jews at the time apparently did go to visit the site of Lot's wife. Berakoth 54a.

⁵ Donald Ray Howard, Writers and pilgrims: medieval pilgrimage narratives and their posterity, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960, p.9

Englishmen at the end of the nineteenth century. The original aim of the society, as stated in a preface to the last volume of pilgrim translations in 1897, was "to place within the reach of English readers the more important of the records which the early and medieval pilgrims have left of their pilgrimages to Jerusalem and the Holy Land."⁶ It would be hard to separate this process of putting the Holy Land 'within reach' from European claims to distant territory.

But in the post-colonial age, medieval travel has received far less attention than modern travel. Partly this could be because medieval travel has relatively little to say about the power imbalances of colonialism. Studies that do focus on medieval travel (such as the extended survey by Mary Campbell) often portray it as a prelude to later voyages of discovery and colonialism. Though travel and conquest are clearly connected, viewing medieval travel through the lens of later power struggles inevitably distorts.

Whenever there is a power struggle, the way the stronger group defines the weaker one is a fertile area of study. In the case of medieval travel writing, editors often take for granted that the travelers indulge in imaginative geography. The religious orientation of the

⁶ Library of the Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, (hereafter PPTS) London 1887-1897, repr. New York: AMS Press, 1971, vol. 13, preface. The ambiguity of the word "English" is revealing. The editor refers to the nation as well as the language.

travelers automatically makes them unreliable observers. The prevailing wisdom has it that medieval travel was about religion and that modern travel is about observation. Though it is difficult to draw a sharp chronological line to divide between the modern and the medieval traveler, the two can be separated by attitude. Moderns travel to observe, medievals to participate.

But the fact remains that medieval travel needs to be understood in its own context. Up until now that mandate has been interpreted very narrowly. Early modern editors, like the men who worked on the Palestine Pilgrims' Texts, were more concerned with results than with process. They focused primarily on mimetic criticism, asking if travelers gave the correct distances between two places, or accurate dimensions of mountains and lakes.⁷ Even a casual reader will quickly see that some medieval writers were better informed and more observant than others. Almost all medieval writers, however, privileged texts over empirical evidence. Given a contradiction between what they had read and what they had seen, they almost always chose book knowledge

⁷ See, for example, the introduction to volume 1, the works of Eusebius. The translator writes that he "has been requested by the committee of the society to analyze the accounts of these works with the view of determining, if possible, by their aid and by the evidence furnished by recent discoveries...the extent, position, and general arrangements of the sacred buildings erected by the emperor at Jerusalem." Eusebius, Life of Constantine, extracts trans. John Bernard, PPTS vol. 1, Introduction, p.v.

over physical experience. At the very least, they tried to reconcile the two. They had what Edward Said calls (in referring to literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) a "textual attitude". And so medieval travel writing has gotten itself a bad name in relation to the more scientific outlook of Renaissance travelers and explorers, who made a point of at least aiming for objective reality.

Recent scholarship operates on the premise that despite this supposed objectivity, the modern travel account strongly reflects the author's needs and/or goals. In fact, the very appearance of objectivity is important, acting as a sort of formal textual witness to the reliability of the author's observations. What is true for writing also holds true for maps. Modern geographers borrow terms from literary criticism to show that maps, like travel accounts, use their own appearance of objectivity as a way of asserting power.

So to truly understand the places depicted in a map or travel account, the reader or viewer needs to understand the world from which the representation comes. In the case of medieval travel writing, context is everything. Medieval Jewish, Muslim and Christian travel writers consciously created cultural products. They knew that they were shaping a world view and tried, where possible, to assert themselves as authority figures in the dialogue between reader and writer.

To observe this process in action, I have chosen to study writers who crossed from the western side of the Mediterranean to its eastern end, visiting an area referred to variously as the Land of Israel, Palestine and the Holy Land between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. These years are characterized by heavy traffic over the Mediterranean (including the Crusades) and by significant travel writing in three religious traditions.

The anonymous thirteenth -century author of the City of Jerusalem begins his account with a description of Jerusalem as it was some thirty years before he saw it, when it was still under Christian rule. He explains that because most Christians enjoy hearing about the holy city of Jerusalem, he will provide background about the city at the time of its capture by Saladin in 1187. "Many persons there may be who will wish to hear these things: those to whom it is displeasing may pass over this place."⁸ I will follow his example by offering background information before getting to the main point of my study. I do not think my readers will find this displeasing, but I offer a breakdown by chapters to enable them to find the parts they like best.

In Chapter One, I outline some of the technological, literary, historical and spiritual trends that form the context of medieval pilgrimage writing. I will focus on travel, travel writing, map making and

⁸ City of Jerusalem, trans. CR. Conder, PPTS vol.6, p.1.

pilgrimage. Since each of these subjects has already generated shelves of books, I will present only enough material to create a meaningful context for the later chapters.

In Chapter Two, I will introduce the writers and let them speak for themselves. I have chosen a representative sample of easily accessible works written by people who traveled east for primarily religious reasons. A number of pilgrim writers explain why they wrote their books. Very few pilgrim travelers explain *how* they did this, but I will try to find clues to the writing process. I will also examine the editing process, asking how medieval travelers evaluate the information they gathered. I will show that often, the process of evaluation was meant to be interactive. The reader was invited to help the author along.

Having shown that there is in fact a conscious relationship between reader and writer, I will devote the rest of the study to examining how the authors assert their authority and why. Chapter Three will demonstrate that writers placed themselves between the reader and earlier texts. The writers used themselves and their books to mediate between the reader and the texts or places they described. Clearly, medieval pilgrim writers, like cartographers, were fully aware that they were creating cultural products.

In Chapter Four I will show how the writers used their positions of authority to refine the images of others. Defining others

automatically refines the image of self. In pointing out the unusual or unexpected, writers remind their readers of what is familiar. Ultimately what happens through this genre of writing is that readers are invited into a textual world in which they are themselves redefined.

In Chapter Five, I will show that travel writers invoke physical places as authorities. Certain holy places actually seem to have the power to defend themselves from desecration by others.

The connection between the actual locations and the writing about them parallels in many ways the tension between maps and the world they depict. Modern scholarship views medieval maps not as inexact reproductions of the exterior world, but as guides to the interior world of the cartographer and his society. This new appreciation for maps as cultural objects ought to be applied to pilgrimage accounts. Moving beyond the strictures of mimetic criticism produces a paradoxical set of observations. On the one hand, pilgrimage literature operates almost independently from observation as a self-conscious cultural production. On the other hand, just because pilgrims are seeking a sacred past or ritual present does not blind them to contemporary realities. Though books are a starting point, a source of authority, and a final result of these pilgrimages, there is a thread of extra-textual reality going through these accounts that keeps the reader involved enough to buy into the whole notion of textuality.

Before entering that textual world, we should first look at the physical world in which our writers lived.

CHAPTER ONE - PLACE

The shape of the medieval world, forms of travel and pilgrimage

Geography and Cartography

The travelers we will be studying came from societies that had developed relatively sophisticated approaches to locating themselves in the physical world. Both Muslim and Christian geographers and cartographers were guided by scientific observation and holy books and organized their information for secular and sacred needs.

The physical world into which Islam was born was seventh-century Arabia. Unlike Christianity, this new religion spread together with a political entity. The spread of Islam was quick, and together, the *din wa-dawla* changed the face of Asia, Africa and Europe within a hundred years of Muhammad's lifetime. Not surprisingly, the Arab conquerors learned a great deal of geography in their conquests. Though some geographical information had been available in the pre-Islamic Arabian peninsula, the new empire was eager to gain specific and detailed knowledge so that Muslim sovereigns could levy taxes and evaluate further conquests.

The practical realities of empire building meant that the earliest rulers (the Rashidun caliphs and the Umayyad dynasty of the mid-seventh to mid-eighth centuries) did not have the time, resources, or even the inclination, to devote much time to the development of geography and other sciences. But this changed when the Abbasid dynasty came to power in 750. Many of the ancient centers of scientific study had by now been incorporated into the empire of Islam. The conquest of Egypt put the Arabs in direct contact with the intellectual history of Alexandria, home of the famous Claudius Ptolemy (90-ca.170), who organized the geographical knowledge of the Greeks. Jund-i-Shapur in Iran was an important center in its own right as well as a receptor of Indian mathematics. The Abbasids were especially well-positioned to capitalize on the Iranian geographical tradition because they had moved the capital from Damascus to Baghdad. Though the ninth and tenth centuries were not politically stable for the Abbasid caliphs, they were fertile times for science in the Arab world, as caliphs (and sometimes the upstarts who challenged them) supported the translation of scientific works from Greek, Pahlavi and Sanskrit into Arabic. Much of the geographical and cosmological work of this period applied the principles of the earlier scientific schools to observations made from newly-built observatories. Scientific geography under the Abbasids was sometimes impressively accurate. For example, a scientific mission sponsored by the Caliph al-Ma'mun in about 827

estimated a one-degree meridian arc close to today's accepted value.¹ Though the Abbasid territories of Iran, Iraq and Egypt were particularly productive, scientific knowledge was also on the rise in Umayyad Spain. Al-Marjiti (d.ca. 1007) revised an astronomical work popular in the east by taking Cordova as the prime meridian. This work was translated into Latin by Adelard of Bath in 1126 and subsequently formed the basis for many later astronomical writings in Christian Europe.²

As al-Marjiti's choice shows, the geographer makes a statement by choosing his center. This rule applies not just to mathematical geography, but to human geography as well. The Iraqi school of geographers, which includes al-Mas'udi (d.956) and Ibn Khurdaddbih (c.820-c.912), tends to put Iran at the physical center but to describe as much of the known world as possible. Meanwhile, some geographers took a more Islamo-centric approach to describing the world. The Balkhi school of geographers, named for Abu Zayd al-Balkhi (d.934) and including such figures as the cartographer Ibn Hawqal (fl. 970s) and the extraordinarily perceptive al-Maqdisi (d. ca.1000), wrote for an exclusively Muslim audience. These writers generally stayed within the borders of the *Dar al-Islam* and paid special attention to Arabia and

¹ Pier Giovanni Donini, Arab Travelers and Geographers, London: Immel Publishing, 1991, p.37. The mission arrived at a value of 56 2/3 Arabian miles, or 111.8 kilometers. Today's accepted value is 111.1 kilometers.

Mecca. Not surprisingly, their world maps showed Mecca at the center of the world. As Sayyid Maqbul Ahmad has put it, this school of geographers also "reorientated the geographical knowledge so as to corroborate it with some of the concepts found in the *Qur'an*,"³ For example, the Qur'anic verses "He has set two seas in motion that flow side by side together/ With an interstice between them which they cannot cross" (Q55:19-20) meant that the Balkhi school of geographers separated the Indian Ocean from the Mediterranean Sea only by the Isthmus of Suez.⁴

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Arab-Islamic geography made major strides. Two of the great contributors to the discipline were actually better known for their accomplishments in other areas. The Bukharan Ibn Sina (d.1037) is most famous for his philosophical and medical writings. But at least twelve of the nearly 270 books attributed to him deal primarily with the shape and position of the earth and try to explain the formation of seas, volcanoes and minerals.⁵ The most objective scientist of medieval Islam was probably al-Biruni (d. after 1050), who was not only a geographer, but a mathematician and ethnographer as well.

² Sayyid Maqbul Ahmad, A History of Arab-Islamic Geography (9th - 16th Century A.D.), Amman: Al al-Bayt Unniversity, 1995, p.32.

³ Ahmad, p.74.

⁴ Ahmad, p.97.

The single most important geographer of the age was Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad al-Sharif al-Idrisi (1100-1166). Born in Morocco and educated in Cordova, he traveled to Asia Minor, France and Spain, and along the coast of England. At the invitation of the Norman King of Sicily, Roger II (1097-1154), he settled in Palermo, the Sicilian capital. Roger commissioned a world map (which will be mentioned again later) and book of geography, which Idrisi produced. Idrisi does not add to mathematical or astronomical geography, but still describes the world far more comprehensively than his predecessors did. The book is essentially a description of a world map based on Ptolemy's division of the world into seven climatic zones. Idrisi is quite accurate in his descriptions of Europe, the Mediterranean, North Africa, and West and Central Asia, though the information about the Far East and Southeast Asia is relatively sketchy. Idrisi draws on Ptolemy and Ibn Khurdadhbih, among others, but follows Ibn Hawqal of the Balkh school in assuming that the land mass separating the Mediterranean and the Ocean is like an isthmus. Though Idrisi's work came out of Norman Sicily, it took hundreds of years to have an impact on Christian Europe. An abridgment was published in Rome in 1592, and a Latin translation was published in Paris in 1619.⁶

⁵ Ahmad, p.129.

⁶ Ahmad, p.166, refers to Giovanni Oman, "*Notizie bibliografiche sul geografo arabo al-Idrisi (XII secolo) e sull sue opere,*" *Anneli dell' Istituto Universitario*

Twelfth century Muslim geography is dominated by Idrisi's imposing world map, but most Arab geographers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries concentrated on geographical dictionaries, regional geography and cartography. Some regional studies highlighted the growing political fault lines of the Islamic world. Emerging rulers from once-peripheral areas, relatively new to Islam, were challenging the ethnically Arab Abbasid dynasty based in Baghdad. Mahmud al-Kashghari (fl. 1070s) describes the dialects and geography of the Turkish settlements and draws a map with his hometown of Kashghar at the center. Ibn al-Balkhi (early 12th century) begins his geography of the province of Fars with a history of the ancient Iranian kings.⁷

The vantage points were shifting, but Persian and Arabic geographical writing from the 13th through the fifteenth centuries broke relatively little new ground. Most writers updated earlier works by using a wider variety of sources, but the newer geographers did not question

Oriente di Napoli n.s. 11 (1961) pp.25-61. Some Europeans did have access to Arabic geography, and specifically Idrisi, even before the printed Arabic edition appeared. The geography was not printed in a vacuum but as part of the beginnings of Oriental studies in Europe. See Marina Tolmacheva, "The Medieval Arabic Geographers and the Beginnings of Modern Orientalism," *JMES* 27 (1995) pp.141-156.

⁷ The ancient Persian kings had been a source of local pride and political rallying point for the Buyid dynasty since the tenth century. See Heribert Busse, "The Revival of Persian Kingship under the Buyids," in D.S. Richards, ed., Islamic Civilisation 950-1150, Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1973, pp. 47-69.

the methodology of their predecessors. For example, the Granadan Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi (1214-1274 or 86) expanded upon Idrisi's work by including latitudes and longitudes, which Idrisi had not done. Ibn al-Ibāri (1226-1286), known in Latin as Barhebraeus, wrote Syriac books on philosophy but also on astronomy and cosmography, and made a circular map of the world. Abu'l Fida (1273-1331) wrote on the geography of the known world. He relied not only on earlier books of geography but also on oral reports by travelers. His writings on African geography were known in France and Germany in the sixteenth century.⁸

As we mentioned above, one of the practical uses of geography is tax collection. A perfect example of this application of geography can be found in Egyptian registers of land surveys, known as *rukat*, which were produced from the tenth to fourteenth centuries. The last and best-known of these, *al-Ruk al-Nasiri*, was made in 1315. A similar document, a guide for officials in the Mamluk government of Sultan Jaqmaq (1438-1453) is a governmental calendar which includes geographical information on the Hijaz, Syria and Egypt.

⁸ Ahmad pp.196-97 quotes I.I. Krachkovsky, *Maa al-mukhtat al-Arabiyyah: safhat min al-dhikrayat an al-kutub wa al-bashr*, trans. from Russian Muhammad Munir Mursi, Cairo: Dar al-Nahdah al-Arabiyyah, 1969, translated into English from Russian by Tatiana Minorsky as *Among Arabic Manuscripts: Memories of Libraries and Men*, Leiden: EJ Brill, 1953.

One important work of this era is the geographical section of a Persian history of Iran by Hafiz Abru (d.1430). The book depends on a wide variety of sources, both Arabic and Persian, and specifically mentions the date of its composition because the author realizes that places change over time.⁹ The other important regional geography was by al-Maqrizi (d.1442). Though he lived a large part of his life in Egypt and devoted most of his writing to that country's history and topography, he also benefited from his observations as he performed the *hajj*, studying the pilgrim routes from Abyssinia and southern Arabia.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a number of Arab navigators wrote about the Indian Ocean. We have the names, but not the books, of three well-known navigators of the Abbasid period. Medieval Arab sailors of the Indian Ocean used sea charts. Marco Polo may not be the most reliable source of all time, but there is no reason to doubt him when he says that the charts were good.¹⁰

Though no maps survive from the early Islamic period, the ones that are mentioned seem directly related to military needs and conquest. By the ninth century, the geography of Ptolemy and the maps of Marinus of Tyre had entered the intellectual world of the Arabs, and the Greek style of mapmaking quickly overtook the prevalent Iranian one,

⁹ Ahmad, p.223.

¹⁰ Ahmad, p.239.

which was basically centered around Iran. But the early Arab maps drawn according to Ptolemy's guidelines do not survive. A twelfth-century geographer who saw a world map drawn for the caliph al-Ma'mun (r.813-33) complained that the cartographers had drawn it on a plane, with latitudes and longitudes arranged in straight lines.¹¹ The high point of the Ptolemaic method of Arabic map-making is the circular silver map made in the middle of the twelfth century by Idrisi for Roger II of Sicily. Idrisi probably spent fifteen years producing the map in collaboration with other scientists at Roger's court. Emissaries were sent out to gather geographical information, and Idrisi seems to have consulted with contemporary travelers. The original map has been lost, but fortunately, a miniature of it is appended to one manuscript of his book.¹²

At the beginning of the tenth century the Balkhi school of geographers influenced the development of another style of cartography. This new style took as its basic unit the Islamic Empire, the *Dar al-Islam* (ignoring the possibility that this world could grow or contract). The Islamic world was divided into *iqlims* (climes, zones), each of which was drawn separately. World maps showed Mecca at the center. These geographers paid almost no attention to southern and western Europe. Anatolia was a standing battlefield, so there was little

¹¹ Ahmad, p.351.

opportunity for trade and geographical study to the west of it. Europeans did cross the Mediterranean to the Middle East, but there was probably much less traffic, and less interest, the other way.¹³

By the fourteenth century, Islamic maps show grids of vertical and horizontal lines. This system was probably learned from the Chinese by way of Mongol maps.¹⁴

Meanwhile in Christian Europe progress in geography and cartography was slow but visible. The geography of medieval Europe was not improving measurably over the four hundred years that this study covers.¹⁵ But there was scientific advancement, and occasionally it appeared in maps or geographical writings. Measuring advances in map making skills is helped by the fact that more than six hundred maps and sketches from the years 300 to 1300 have survived to the present day.¹⁶ These are quite varied. For example, a recent study shows that detailed portolan maps of the Mediterranean, maritime maps generally thought to

¹² Ahmad, p.164.

¹³ Donini, p.66.

¹⁴ Ahmad, p.356.

¹⁵ John Kirtland Wright, The Geographical lore of the time of the Crusades: A study in the History of Medieval science and Tradition in Western Europe, New York: American Geographical Society, 1925, p.254.

¹⁶ Brown, p.94.

have appeared only in the fourteenth century, were in fact available by the end of the twelfth.¹⁷

What did medieval Europeans know about the size and shape of the world? It is difficult to classify how Europeans in the Middle Ages saw the world. Few people had all the facts at hand, but some general attitudes make themselves clear. The size and shape of the earth and lands were closely linked with the place of the earth in the heavens. Most Christian writers thought the earth was a sphere, immobile at the center of the universe.¹⁸ In later centuries, the spherical shape of the earth was basically a given. Dante feels no need to explain his assumption of the world's shape. Even John Mandeville, hardly the standard of truthfulness, works with the spherical shape of the world. Gautier de Metz, who wrote a long rhymed geographic poem in the Lorraine dialect in about 1245, explained that "a man could go around the world as a fly makes the tour of an apple."¹⁹ Describing a sphere in

¹⁷ Patrick Gautier Dalché, Carte Marine et Portulan au XIIe Siècle: Le Liber de Existencia Riveriarum et Forma Maris Nostri Mediterranei, Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1995. (Collection de L'Ecole Française de Rome 203), pp.103-05.

¹⁸ Wright, pp.150-155. The idea that medieval European scientists thought the world was flat is actually a 19th century distortion.

¹⁹ David Woodward, "Medieval *Mappaemundi*" in J. B. Harley and David Woodward, eds., The History of Cartography: Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean (Chicago and London, 1987), p.321 and p.345.

words was easier than drawing one on paper or parchment. The difficulties posed by projection meant that maps might represent the world as rectangular, ovoid, round or irregularly shaped.²⁰

Woodward has defined four overlapping periods in the history of European world maps, or *mappaemundi*.²¹ The first phase, from the 5th through 7th centuries, was a time of conflict and synthesis between the traditions of the Greco-Roman world and the teachings of the Church fathers. An important development was the creation of the T-O scheme by Isidore of Seville (560-636). In the T-O map the world is depicted as a circle surrounded by a river. With east at the top, Asia takes up the top half of the map. Under it is a line of water, the south side representing the Nile and the north being the Don River. This line marks the top of the 'T'. The stem of the 'T' is the Mediterranean, separating Europe from Africa. Though Isidore's original map - probably a sketched diagram- no longer exists, over 660 examples of this style survive. It remained a dominant theme throughout medieval cartography.

The second phase, from the beginning of the 8th to the beginning of the 12th century, has been called "the golden age of Church

²⁰ Norman J.W. Thrower, Maps & Civilization: Cartography in Culture and Society, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.41. Woodward, pp.319-321.

²¹ Woodward, pp.299-315.

cartography²². Charlemagne is known to have owned maps. His biographer Einhart (770-840) claimed that the emperor had four maps - three gold and one silver.²³ Pope Zacharias (pope 741-52) had a world map painted on the wall of the Lateran palace.

But the great innovation of the age was actually the "Mozarabic" map, influenced by Muslim Spain. This style of rectangular map, oriented east, shows the four rivers of Paradise as well as a fourth continent often accompanied by a legend telling the viewer that the fourth continent is too far and too hot to be known. A further import that came to northwest Europe by way of Muslim Spain was the interest in latitude and longitude. In the 11th and 12th centuries, there were some attempts in Europe to measure longitude, but the use of coordinates did not really catch on. Roger Bacon (ca.1214-1294) appended to his 1268 *Opus majus* a map that used coordinates and recognized the distortions that come from drawing a sphere on a flat piece of paper. Unfortunately, the map has not survived and the next known use of coordinates comes from Vienna in 1425. Apparently

²² Leo Bagrow, History of Cartography, rev. and enl. R.A. Skelton, trans. D.L. Paisey, Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London, C.A. Watts, 1964, p.42, as quoted in Woodward, p.299 n.70.

²³ Brown, p.94.

cartographers were unaware of, or uninterested in, advances in geographical knowledge.²⁴

The third phase of map making, from about 1100 to 1300, is remarkable in a few ways. First, the crusades appear to have had almost no effect, and neither did the general upsurge in scientific knowledge. The decisive event seems instead to have been Gerard of Cremona's translation of Ptolemy's *Almagest* in Toledo in 1175. But if travelers were not useful in making maps, they might still take advantage of them. Jacques de Vitry, bishop of Acre in the 13th century, says that a map was useful to him.²⁵

Another notable feature of this phase of European map making is that four important world maps from the 13th century - including the Ebstorf and Hereford *mappaemundi* - were either produced in or had very close ties to England. Though Jerusalem and Rome were usually prominent, they were by no means the center of these maps, as has been extrapolated from some famous examples. In these and other maps of the age, there is a trend to draw the world in ovals.

The fourth phase, roughly from the beginning of the 14th century to the middle of the 15th, marks a transition between the Middle Ages

²⁴ Woodward, pp.322-23.

²⁵ Woodward, p.287. Also see John Block Friedman, The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981, p.42.

and the Renaissance. During this period, three concepts come together - the confined world map, the portolan chart, and the use of Ptolemaic coordinates. For the first time, maps are more likely to stand alone than to be incorporated into a larger text, and Pietro Vesconte, who worked in Venice between 1310 and 1330, was the first professional cartographer in western Europe to routinely sign and date his work. (Marino Sanudo, whose writing we will examine later, probably used a map from Vesconte's workshop.) The high point of this phase was the 1375 Catalan Atlas drawn by Abraham Cresques and his son Jafuda. This map, actually twelve leaves mounted on a board like a screen, focused on the Mediterranean. One of the first maps to benefit from the Polo family's experience in Central Asia, it still has a few medieval characteristics, such as the near-centrality of Jerusalem. Because of new discoveries and the Latin translation of Ptolemy's *Geography* in about 1407 by Jacobus Angelus, Jerusalem moves from the center of circular maps by the fifteenth century.²⁶

What medieval European cartography lacks in its representation of the earth, it makes up in the intellectual world view of the geographers and cartographers. Though Europeans traveled, they were relatively uninterested in updating the geographical knowledge they had inherited from the classical world. However, the two streams of travel and

²⁶ Woodward, p.315-317.

tradition might share space on a map. For example, pilgrimage routes are shown on the famous Hereford map of the late thirteenth century.²⁷

Having seen the development of geography and cartography, we can now examine their function. The multiple functions are immediately apparent in the number of words employed to designate maps. Latin used any number of words to mean "map" - a *mappamundi* (world map) was the common term for a world map in the late medieval period and might even include portolan charts, but one finds also *imagines mundi*, *pictura*, *descriptio*, *tabula* and *estoire*.²⁸ Medieval Arabs used a number of different terms for maps - *jughrafiya* (geography) and *surat al-ard* (a literal translation of 'geography' mirrored in the Latin *imago mundi*) as well as *rasm al-ard*, *sifat al-dunya*, and *ashkal al-ard*.²⁹

Maps were generally used to depict the world and its empires, but not to delineate boundaries between sovereign political entities. Among medieval Arab geographers, writers and cartographers alike saw boundaries not as lines but as "transition zones of uncertain sovereignty

²⁷ Evelyn Edson, Mapping Time and Space : How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed Their World, (The British Library Studies in Map History, Vol. I) London: The British Library, 1997, pp. 142-3 relies on G.R. Crone, "New Light on the Hereford Map," *Geographical Journal* CXXXI, part 4, Dec. 1965, pp. 447-62, with illustrations.

²⁸ Woodward, p.287.

²⁹ Ahmad, p.348.

between two states.³⁰ A survey of Arabic Muslim maps from the years 820 to 1350 shows that "boundaries are completely omitted from much of the cartography of the period, and are represented only by simple geometric lines having symbolic rather than geographic significance in the rest."³¹ Language confirms what the map makers draw. No fewer than ten terms denote boundaries.³² The notion of a unified Muslim people, "a single *umma*" in the words of the Qur'an, is visually represented by maps. Texts and maps both show boundaries within the Islamic world that are not sharp. Instead, sovereign power radiates out of the city, ebbing as it spreads until it mixes with another power center.³³ Almost all "medieval Muslim geographers and historians thought of frontiers in terms of boundary zones rather than of sharply defined line boundaries."³⁴ Medieval Muslim geography can be understood as linear in terms of communication between cities. The lines are not interrupted by boundaries, since the cosmopolitan men who categorized the world used the city as touchstone.

³⁰ Ralph W. Brauer, Boundaries and Frontiers in Medieval Muslim Geography, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1995. (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, volume 85 part 6), p.5

³¹ Brauer, pp.6-7.

³² Brauer, pp.3-12.

³³ Brauer, p.13.

³⁴ Brauer, p.33.

Among Christian travelers, even John Poloner, a German priest who traveled in about 1421 and who drew a detailed colored map of the Holy Land, is quite vague about borders. Where they exist, they tend to be rivers, as opposed to man-made divisions. For example, "But all the land from the river Tigris even to Egypt is called generally Syria."³⁵ Burchard of Mount Zion, writing in about 1280, points out a rare but definite border. "The boundary between these people's [Assassins] land and that of the Christians is marked by some stones, on which on the side of the Christians are carved crosses, and on that of the Assassins knives."³⁶

The practical implication of this conception was that border control was a major issue at ports, but not for overland travel. Customs duties and poll taxes were collected not at a border line, but within cities or at least within the administrative district of the cities. Only once does the twelfth-century Ibn Jubayr discuss a physical border, that being a tree which the robber bands of Franks respect, but the fact that it is unofficial simply emphasizes that this was not the norm.³⁷

³⁵ John Poloner, Description of the Holy Land, trans. Aubrey Stewart, PPTS vol. 6, p.35.

³⁶ Burchard of Mount Zion, A Description of the Holy Land, trans. Aubrey Stewart, PPTS, vol.12, p.106.

³⁷ Brauer, p.35.

Brauer argues that the disinterest in boundaries among Arab geographers and cartographers corresponds with some cultural truths about the Islamic empire. These include the unity of the people, the *umma*; the role of the state as religious facilitator rather than dynastic or territorial power; continuing war against non-Muslim lands resulting in changing boundaries; a possible understanding that people used but did not own land; and the urban orientation of the Islamic empire (with power radiating out from cities) balanced with remnants of a nomadic desert culture that did not assign great value to territory as such.³⁸ In other words, vague boundaries both inside and at the edges of the Islamic world are a geographic illustration of larger cultural truths.

In Europe as well, geography and cartography revealed a blending of cultural and religious realities with empirical observation. Maps were not only for directional purposes, and they were not widely used. Most medieval Europeans did not use or see maps at all. "It simply did not occur to people in the middle ages to use maps, to see landscape or the world in a cartographic way."³⁹

Because maps were not strictly functional in the way that they often are today, early Christian European maps are hardly useful at all. The rectangular map of Cosmas is so much more allegorical than

³⁸ Brauer, pp. 40-43.

³⁹ P.D.A. Harvey, Medieval Maps, London: British Library Board, 1991, p.7.

practical that “not even the author could have used it to get from place to place”⁴⁰ and the Albi map of the middle of the eighth century, centered around the Mediterranean, is crudely drawn to the point of uselessness. Some maps were meant for consultation, like the strip map by the Benedictine monk Matthew Paris (c.120-1259) showing pilgrimage routes within England and one from England to southern Italy, the departure point for Holy Land pilgrims. (This same monk also made a world map -*mappamundi* - and a highly abstract map of Great Britain, said to be the oldest map of a European country.)⁴¹ Cartographers were aware of their limitations. Matthew Paris’ famous comment on his map of Britain show how scale might be sacrificed: “if the page had allowed it, this whole island would have been longer.”⁴² Of course, even highly abstract maps could be but to practical purposes. There is a fourteenth-century map of England, the Gough map, probably made for administrative purposes, like the Egyptian *Ruk al-Nasiri*.⁴³

The elaborate maps of Christian Europe tried to convey messages about time as well as place. Readers/viewers were placed in temporal as well as spatial context. Maps did not only turn spaces into places, they turned them, in Mary Campbell’s phrase, into “places

⁴⁰ Brown, p.93.

⁴¹ Edson, p.118, Thrower, p.45. There is a substantial body of literature on Matthew Paris. See Edson, pp.118-125

⁴² Woodward, p.288.

where." It has been said that medieval European maps are "projections of history on a geographical base."⁴⁴ Maps could be repositories of mythical lore, or might have historical, narrative function, but instead of the figures being displayed in sequence, they are arranged geographically.⁴⁵

Because history and geography are presented on the same visual plane, a medieval European world map often depicted places from the Hebrew Bible. Sometimes the tripartite division of the world - into Europe, Africa and Asia - was represented by the three sons of Noah. Some places from the life of Jesus and the apostles appeared along with major pilgrimage sites. Places that no longer existed, like Troy, might be found together on a map with newer cities like Genoa and Barcelona. The maps also gave geographical representation to places or people who had never been seen. The threat of Gog and Magog, the hope of Prester John, and the strangeness of monstrous races on the periphery all appear.

The Hereford map of the late thirteenth century shows, among other things, the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the Flood, and the wanderings of the Jews in the desert. The Ebstorf map, a 3.6x3.6 meter work that was destroyed in 1943 during the bombing of Hanover, shows

⁴³ Thrower, p.45.

⁴⁴ Woodward, p.342.

Jerusalem with Jesus rising from the dead. Noah's Ark and the Tower of Babel also appear, as do Adam and Eve with a serpent. Only later did map makers "narrow their focus to physical space and eliminate other dimensions, such as religious meaning and history, which were so important to the medieval world map."⁴⁶ In fact, maps were only slightly less about a unified world view by virtue of being more scientific; they were simply less forthright about their intent.

Medieval cartographers (at least in Christian Europe) would have agreed with modern geographers that a map should be understood as a cultural product. Modern geographers make much of pointing out that medieval maps represented not just a quaintly confused perception of the exterior order but a pictorial manifestation of the idealized world view of the map maker. It seems likely that the medieval map maker was fully aware that his work had a dimension beyond geographical representation. The T-O map is actually a cross. Sometimes this is accentuated, as in the Ebstorf map, with the body of Jesus surrounding the whole world.⁴⁷ The French theologian, mystic and

⁴⁵ Woodward, pp.289-90.

⁴⁶ Edson, p.x.

⁴⁷ Woodward, p.334, n.236.

philosopher Hugh of Saint Victor (ca. 1097-1141) wrote that symbolic meanings were included in maps on purpose.⁴⁸

The placement of maps and mazes in churches, for example, would argue quite strongly that maps were understood in their own time as cultural products. Often the visual affect was only part of the picture - surviving maps from Christian Europe (possibly copies of wall maps) are frequently found in books, and the author assumed that readers would have help in establishing their meaning.⁴⁹ The maps that have survived to this day are probably still around because their primary value lay in their visual appeal or because they were so comprehensive that they were treated as reference works. A single sheet of parchment taken along on a journey is much less likely to survive than a monumental wall map in a church, in the same way that a modern tourist pamphlet is treated more casually than a coffee-table book or encyclopedia. So the maps we can analyze have been pre-sorted; educational maps far outnumber the geographically functional ones.

Understanding the map as a representation of cultural identity may explain the near-total absence of Jews from the field. People who

⁴⁸ Woodward, p.334. For more on Christian symbolism as used by Hugh of Saint Victor and others see Gerard B. Ladner, "Medieval and Modern Understanding of Symbolism: A Comparison," *Speculum* 54 (1979) pp.223-56.

do not control territory are not likely to use it as a vehicle of expression. The works that do exist are devoted to the Land of Israel. Jews might be involved with the technical details of cartography, though. In the fifteenth century, in fact, the industry was dominated by Mallorcan Jews, the Cresques father and son being the best-known. A Spanish Jew converted to Christianity, Petrus Alfonsus, created the earliest climate map known in the West in 1110. He was working from Arab sources, where the format was well known.⁵⁰

Most medieval maps were oriented east, according to Roman tradition. Following the Greeks meant orienting a map to the north. Muslim maps are generally oriented south (and some Europeans who copy them do that) possibly because the Zoroastrians, who came under Muslim rule early, considered south a sacred direction, and also because most conquests were north of Mecca, so that at first, most Muslims faced south to pray.⁵¹ Among Christian map makers, Paradise was universally put in the east, and in one version of the Romance of

⁴⁹ There were of course geographical written works which had no pictures. Edson p.133.

⁵⁰ Edson, p.121. A copy of the map is in Harley and Woodward vol. 1 p.355, fig. 18.73. For the life of Petrus Alfonsus see Dorthée Metlitzki, The Matter of Araby in Medieval England, New Haven, 1977.

⁵¹ Woodward, p.337 and n.244. Also see B.L. Gordon, "Sacred Directions, Orientation, and the Top of the Map," *History of Religions* 10 (1971) pp.211-227, esp. p.218.

Alexander, after the king subdues India, he is actually brought to the gates of the terrestrial paradise.⁵²

The Center of the World

A map is literally an illustration of the self-perception of the cartographer's society. The most obvious example is the centering of the map. Not all medieval Christian maps put Jerusalem at the center, but so many did that this became a geographically accepted notion. A number of medieval Muslim maps put the Ka'ba in Mecca at the center of the world. In both traditions, world maps are usually surrounded by an ocean and monstrous creatures may populate those threatening blank spaces on a map that represent the limits of human knowledge.

One main purpose of medieval Muslim cartography was to help Muslims locate Mecca for prayer. Mecca was the center of the Islamic world, not physically but ritually. Since the beginning of the religion, Muslims have faced the Ka'ba to pray. (The call to prayer is recited, the dead are buried and animals are slaughtered in the holy direction as

⁵² Wright, pp.262-63. In this story it is a Jew who tells him where he is. The Jew, as a familiar Other, mediates between heaven and earth.

well.) That is a confluence of spiritual and geographical place.⁵³ But the geography needed to locate Mecca was conducted completely separately from scientific geography and cartography, so much so that a geographer as accomplished as al-Biruni was apparently unaware of it.

From the ninth century on, astronomers tried to figure the *qibla* - the sacred direction facing Mecca - from anywhere on earth. Generally the direction was calculated astronomically, not mathematically. But the values were not always accepted universally, and architecture and writings show that often in a single place, different *qiblas* were accepted. To complicate matters, scholars disagreed over whether one had to face exactly the geometrical angle of Mecca or whether the general direction (for example, south from Damascus) was sufficient.

By the 9th century, Ibn Khurdhadhbih had written in his book a Ka'ba-centered scheme. A similar scheme, albeit joined to a Ptolemaic seven-climate survey, appears in a book on the *qibla* by a 10th century legal scholar named Ibn al-Qass. But the best-known name in sacred geography is the Yemeni Muhammad b. Suraka al-Amiri, d.1019. His theory, preserved in the writings of others, uses words rather than pictures to explain to people the direction to face when praying. He divides the world into sections (8, 11 or 12) and tells people in each

⁵³ Ahmad p.358 refs. David A. King and Richard P. Lorch, "Qibla Charts, Qibla Maps, and Related Instruments." The History of Cartography , vol.2, p.189.

section how they ought to stand. Some schemes use the Pole Star and tell people to locate themselves in relation to that. The eight and twelve sector schemes were used throughout the Islamic world from the eleventh to as late as the nineteenth century. Mosques are generally oriented to the Ka'ba but sometimes the complex calculations of geography meant that the orientations were not what one would expect. The Great Mosque of Cordova, for example, faces south. It has been suggested that this was a mistake by Syrian architects, but it may also be that the mosque was laid out to be perpendicular to summer sunrise (roughly 30 degrees east of south) in order to parallel the north-west wall of the Ka'ba.⁵⁴

The notion that a particular location is the center of the earth is common to the three Abrahamic faiths but not unique to them. When a place is considered "the navel of the earth" it must be exalted above the surrounding areas. Its other functions are roughly analogous to the role of the navel to the embryo - the sacred place is the point of earth's origin, it is earth's center, it is the point of communication with higher and lower spheres, and it is the area of food distribution. Such

⁵⁴ Gordon, and D.A. King, "Makka - As the Centre of the World," in EI.

characteristics are often associated with mountains and shrines of the Ka'ba and the Temple Mount.⁵⁵

Putting Jerusalem at the center of the world has a long history. Ezekiel 5:5 says specifically that Jerusalem is in the middle of the world, and the Talmud goes on to say that Zion was the point from which everything else was created.⁵⁶ Isaiah 2:1 gives Jerusalem's position an eschatological bent - eventually it will be higher than everything. Later on, this future vision appears as established fact. The Talmud asserts that the Temple Mount is higher than the rest of the Land of Israel, and the Land of Israel is higher than all other lands.⁵⁷ This has at least one practical advantage - the Land of Israel was not submerged by the waters of the Flood.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ A.J. Wensinck,, "The Idea of the Western Semites Concerning the Navel of the Earth," Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1916, pp.1-65 in Studies of A.J. Wensinck, New York: Arno Press, 1978.

⁵⁶ *Yoma* 54b.

⁵⁷ *Qiddushin* 69a.

⁵⁸ *Bereshit Rabba* 32:10, refers to the statement of Genesis 7:19 that the waters of the flood covered all the mountains. Significantly, the statement about Jerusalem is part of dialogue in which a rabbi explains to a Samaritan the value of visiting the city even though it is little more than a hill of mud. Midrash be-reshit raba, ed. Hanokh Albek and J. Theodor, Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1965, 2nd printing, vol.1, p. 265. Wensinck explains that raging waters represent Chaos and the sanctuary represents the Divine Order, p.15.

Jewish ritual reinforced the centrality of the city by instituting prayer in the direction of Jerusalem. Though some Islamic traditions point to Jerusalem as the center of the earth and point of its origin, most such statements are about Mecca.⁵⁹ Based on Qur'anic statements (42:5, 6:92), Mecca was often referred to as the center of the earth. A tradition of A'isha refers to Mecca as the highest point on earth, and Ibn Hisham reports that the Ka'ba was not submerged in the flood.⁶⁰ The concept was of course reinforced by the direction of prayer to Mecca and by maps showing the Ka'ba at the center of the world.

But spiritual centrality and physical centrality do not always correspond exactly. In Christian Europe, at least, the physical centrality of Jerusalem was not always a given.⁶¹ Jerome, commenting on Ezekiel in the fifth century, stressed the centrality of Jerusalem, as did Isidore of Seville at the beginning of the seventh, though we have seen that his T-O map does not express the concept symbolically. It is impossible for Jerusalem to be at the center of a T-O map. Late Medieval maps generally have Jerusalem at the middle. The centering

⁵⁹ Wensinck, pp.11-36.

⁶⁰ Wensinck, pp.14-15.

⁶¹ Iain Macleod Higgins, "Defining the Earth's Center in a Medieval "Multi-Text": Jerusalem in The Book of John Mandeville" in Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles, eds., Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the Middle Ages, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998, pp.29-53, especially pp.34-39.

of Jerusalem became prominent in 1100-1300, possibly as a result of the crusades. This technique was so prevalent that it now helps determine dates of maps. This was not necessarily the case before the twelfth, or even the thirteenth, century, and it would be wrong to say that medieval maps generally put Jerusalem at the physical center of the earth.

Pilgrims are the one group of people who might be especially likely to stress the idea of Jerusalem's centrality, but they are noticeably silent on the issue. In fact, a number of Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem struggle with the possibility that this may not be geographically correct.⁶² In pilgrim writings from the fifth through ninth centuries there is only a single mention of Jerusalem as the center of the world. Only in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in other words, the crusading period, does the concept appear, and even here it is not in every pilgrimage account. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries have even fewer mentions of Jerusalem's centrality. What is most notable about the references to Jerusalem is that "virtually all of the references are characterized by their extreme brevity and their lack of significance in context...a good many authors were content to fulfill the presumed expectations of their readers about the nature of sacred geography,

⁶² Wright, pp.259-60.

leaving their own views unstated.”⁶³ Theoderich's 1172 Booklet on the Holy Places (*Libellis de locis sanctis*) says that “they assert”⁶⁴ that the Chapel of St. James in Jerusalem is the center of the earth. Saewulf, an English pilgrim who traveled about seventy years before Theoderich, cites Jesus himself as having marked a spot, now in the courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, as being the center of the earth. This is further supported by a reference to the Book of Psalms.⁶⁵ At the end of the 7th century, Adamnan wrote down Arculf's experiences. Jerusalem as the center of the earth appears only once. Arculf mentions a tall pillar in the middle of the city which does not cast a shadow in the summer solstice when the sun is at the center of the heavens. This proves that Jerusalem is at the center of the world. Adamnan supports his physical observation with a Psalm. But despite believing that Jerusalem is the natural center of the earth, Adamnan does not dwell on the issue. Saewulf and Adamnan save the scriptural evidence for last.

The one pilgrim who makes the most out of the issue is Felix Fabri, coming from Germany at the end of the fifteenth century, “perhaps because it was during his lifetime that that most European geographers were decentering Jerusalem as they adapted their world

⁶³ Higgins, p.36.

⁶⁴ Theoderich, Booklet on the Holy Places, trans. Aubrey Stewart, PPTS vol. 5, p.28.

maps to accord with the recently discovered and increasingly influential geographical conceptions of Ptolemy."⁶⁵ Actually, Fabri is in the odd position of saying that Ptolemy wouldn't agree that Jerusalem is the middle of the world, that the lack of a shadow is not necessarily proof that a place is the center of the world, and perhaps even that it is a human need to consider oneself at the center of the world. But then he falls back on the Bible and says - if it says Jerusalem is the middle of the earth, then so it must be.

Though maps of Jerusalem itself must have been early, and we know that the monk Arculf drew a map after his pilgrimage in 670, the truth is that until the establishment of the Crusader state, there is no significant body of these maps. Not surprisingly, the Crusader conquest of Jerusalem in 1099 was followed by a surge of geographical interest in the city. We have European fourteen maps depicting twelfth century Jerusalem, (though some were made as late as the fourteenth century) as opposed to no maps from the Islamic period to then (638-1099). Eleven of the fourteen are round, with the city walls forming a circle, and two intersecting streets forming a cross in the center. The maps are oriented east. Structures which stand out are the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Lord's Temple (the Dome of the Rock, converted to

⁶⁵ Saewulf, An Account of the Pilgrimage of Saewulf to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, trans. Bishop of Clifton, PPTS vol.4, p.12, cites Psalms 74:12.

⁶⁶ Higgins, p.38, cites Woodward p.317 and n.147.

church), the Temple of Solomon (al-Aqsa, on the Temple Mount, new headquarters for the Templars). One also sees not just places but traditions marked on maps.⁶⁷ These maps, though often appended to histories, were not intended to serve as accurate proportional guides around the city. They were supposed to inspire respect for the city's past and pride at its new status as a Christian Jerusalem. The use of the perfect circle symbolizes the ideal city.⁶⁸ A similar scheme applies to medieval maps of Mecca. Maps made after the Crusader losses are even more schematic and geometric, as the physical Jerusalem cedes its place to a heavenly scheme.⁶⁹ Ironically, just the opposite trend was happening in European depictions of the rest of the world.

By the time the style of birds-eye view of towns became popular, Jerusalem was in Muslim hands. The only example of this style was printed in 1486. Drawn by Erhard Reuwich of Utrecht, who accompanied Bernard von Breydenbach on his pilgrimage, the map is part of a general map of the Holy Land and is completely out of scale.

⁶⁷ Milka Levy-Rubin and Rehav Rubin, "The Image of the Holy City in Maps and Mapping," in Nitza Rosovsky, ed., City of the Great King: Jerusalem from David to the Present, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1996, pp.355-357.

⁶⁸ Levy-Rubin and Rubin, p.362, Bianca Kühnel, "Geography and Geometry of Jerusalem," in Nitza Rosovsky, ed., City of the Great King: Jerusalem from David to the Present, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1996, p.317.

⁶⁹ Kühnel, p.319.

Other birds-eye maps are from England (including two by Matthew Paris, in one of which Acre predominates) and Italy. In most of these maps, east is at the top.⁷⁰ This style makes the world smaller and somehow more accessible.

Travel

Medieval travel is generally portrayed as religious, burdensome, and restricted to the aristocracy. Modern travel, on the other hand, is about observation, often with the goal of colonization.⁷¹ These generalizations refer to non-commercial travel, though trade was probably the single most compelling reason for travel in the Middle Ages. Merchants and rich individual Muslims and Jews had far greater opportunities and ability than most Christians to travel, and they took advantage of the fact. The Cairo geniza has yielded documents

⁷⁰ P.D.A. Harvey, "Local and Regional Cartography in Medieval Europe," in J. B. Harley and David Woodward, eds., The History of Cartography: Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1987, vol. 1 part 1, pp.473-476.

⁷¹ Among the many expressing this view, see Mary B. Campbell, The witness and the other world: exotic European travel writing 400-1600, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988, Jás Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés, eds., Voyages & Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel, London: Reaktion Books, 1999, and Duncan and Gregory, cited earlier.

showing that the Jews of Egypt and North Africa were energetic travelers. The upper classes might travel long distances to find suitable marriage partners; the poor might travel to avoid family trouble. In between were refugees (often from Eastern Christendom) traders, scholars, pilgrims (to Jerusalem but also some holy sites in the Galilee and Iraq) and craftsmen in search of a better livelihood.⁷² Similarly, the Muslim world was one of great internal mobility. Biographical dictionaries are full of scholars who traveled from place to place for education. The extent of the Islamic world, the *Dar al-Islam*, was wide enough to allow for years of travel, as Ibn Battuta would show, and of course the pilgrimage to Mecca was the most obvious stimulant for travel.⁷³ But even European Christians traveled more than one might suppose from the standard image of medieval Europe. By the thirteenth century, few towns in France, for example, were without someone who had been on a crusade. Of course, these veterans of the Crusades

⁷² S. D. Goitein, A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, 5 vols., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969-88, vol. 1, pp.42-59, see also Chapter 4, "Travel and Seafaring,"

⁷³ There is a growing body of scholarship on Muslim travel. See Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori, eds., Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, migration and the religious imagination, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990; Ian Richard Netton, ed., Golden Roads: Migration, Pilgrimage and Travel in Mediaeval and Modern Islam, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1993, and

may not have paid attention to, remembered, or related much geographical information, but if nothing else they were living proof that faraway places were more real and more accessible than they once had been.

We know that most of the traffic on the Mediterranean from the 11th to 15th centuries was for trade. The famous east-west trade route stretched from China and India to Western Europe, a journey that could easily take two years. Typically, merchandise from India and China got to the Middle East by way of the Red Sea. Some of the goods were sold at standing markets to the locals, but in Syria and Egypt, the buyers might also be Europeans from Italy and Byzantium. These merchants would use river travel for heavy goods and land travel for light ones, bringing their wares to Europe to be resold at fairs there. Occasionally, Muslim traders brought merchandise directly to Christian Europe, and this kind of semi-direct trade from the east appears to have grown in the eleventh century.⁷⁴ Though the absolute numbers were never large, the high profit margin on eastern luxury goods like silk, spices and porcelain made the trip worthwhile.

As difficult as it is to get hard numbers for the east-west trade, it is even harder to discover the extent of the trade in the opposite

also Netton's Seek Knowledge: Thought and Travel in the House of Islam, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996.

direction. Western Europe certainly exported lumber and slaves to the east. Amber from northern Europe and gold from the south were generally transported along the east-west axis as well. The movement of goods from west to east increased with the Crusades, as Europeans sent men, supplies, and even horses across the Mediterranean to supply the struggling crusader states. Not surprisingly, this traffic coincided with the growth of coinage and spread of credit in Europe.⁷⁵ Italy's location and urban character made it the natural center of the Mediterranean trading network, and Florentine and Venetian gold coins served as the international currency of the era.

To accommodate the increased trade, ships grew larger, and by the fourteenth century they were safer, easier to navigate, and more efficient. But since these ships were not any faster than the ones built in the twelfth century, even sailors who could have relied on compasses

⁷⁴ Donini, p.73.

⁷⁵ The Muslim world, having long had its own internal long-distance trade, was familiar with credit systems. When introduced in Christian Europe (despite some church warnings) credit helped foster what Robert Lopez has called a 'Commercial Revolution' that moved power from the landowner to the merchant. The connection between crusade and trade is developed more fully in Aziz S. Atiya, Crusade, Commerce and Culture, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962.

and sailed out in the open sea tended to stay close to the shore in order to ensure a constant supply of water and provisions.⁷⁶

If the twelfth-century sailor on the Mediterranean was likely to be Muslim, his fourteenth-century counterpart was almost always Christian. How did European Christians come to dominate Mediterranean trade? Some of the shift was a result of wars between Muslims and Christians. As Muslims lost more and more territory in Spain, water travel from Spain to Egypt - always unsafe as it hugged the rocky and unpredictable south coast of the Mediterranean - declined. European ships, free of foreign interference, followed the northern coast, stopping at Christian islands along the way. Meanwhile, the needs of crusaders in the Middle East led Pope Innocent III in 1215 to prohibit trade with Muslims in war materials. At the end of the thirteenth century, the crusades focused on Egypt, so along with renewed calls for embargo came attempts to blockade Egypt entirely. However, trade never stopped completely. The Italians pressured the popes to let them continue trading with the Egyptian Mamluks and from 1344 on, they had papal permission to trade directly.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ John H. Pryor, Geography, Technology and War: Studies in the maritime history of the Mediterranean, 649-1571, Cambridge, NY; Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp.51-55.

⁷⁷ Jonathan Riley-Smith, The Crusades: A Short History, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987, pp.222-225.

Wars alone do not fully explain the shift in the commercial domination of the Mediterranean. Europe's commercial expansion was a strand in a larger pattern of growth. Christian Europe, once the geographical stepchild at western edge of the Roman empire, began in the eleventh century to look beyond its borders. The traffic of pilgrims, scholars and merchants that had existed in the Roman period had never completely stopped, but the sense of belonging to a larger world was renewed as Europeans were less endangered by pagans and Muslims on their own soil; as the population rose and settled more land within Europe; as the economy expanded; as kings consolidated power; and as monasteries and the church became more active powers in European society.⁷⁸ Though these interrelated changes set the stage for an expansionist world view, the later dominance of Europe could hardly be considered inevitable. As we have seen, Europe was a relatively junior partner in a large and complex commercial network that stretched from Europe to China. By the fourteenth century, Asia and India turned inward for political reasons, and the Mongol empire, weakened by the Black Death and poor administration, collapsed, taking with it the east-west land route to China. These changes left Europe the

⁷⁸ J.R. S. Phillips, The Medieval Expansion of Europe, Oxford & New York: University College, Dublin, 1988, pp.18-25.

one part of the international economy in a position to take over the long-distance trade and, by extension, to dominate the world economy.⁷⁹

After the twelfth century, Muslim trade continued to thrive east of the Mediterranean. Fernand Braudel's famous observation that Castile "turned her back" on the Mediterranean in favor of the Atlantic Ocean is mirrored in the fact that by the thirteenth century, Muslim trade turned its face to the Indian Ocean. However, Muslims continued trading in the south-eastern part of the Mediterranean and using Alexandria as a major port.⁸⁰ Europeans did not become a naval power in the Indian Ocean until the sixteenth century, though the Genoese may have had ships there as much as two hundred years earlier.⁸¹

Though the ships were loaded with merchandise, they also carried human cargo in the form of sailors, slaves, merchants, missionaries and pilgrims. This study focuses on the last group, but all

⁷⁹ Janet Abu-Lughod, Before European Hegemony, The World System AD 1250-1350, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp.360-61.

⁸⁰ Fernand Braudel, The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II, 2 vols., Paris, 1949, repr. with translation by Sian Reynolds, Collins: London, 1972, vol. 1, p.294. Muslim ships had long sailed the Indian Ocean. See George Hourani, Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times, 1951, revised and expanded by John Carswell, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. Jewish traders, probably in response to the rising Italians, had shifted their attention from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean about a hundred years earlier. Goitein vol.1, p.149.

travelers in the Middle Ages were subject to the difficulties of travel. Medieval travel was, above all, slow. It took Ibn Jubayr fifty days to travel the 1250 miles from Acre to Messina. Both Muslims and Christians were on board, with a Christian crew sailing.⁸² Some of these ships could hold as many as a thousand passengers, though an average craft would hold more like five hundred. Sailors navigated by the sun and stars, though a recent study has shown that nautical maps of the Mediterranean existed by the twelfth century.⁸³ Everyday life on board could be difficult. It has been pointed out that Ibn Jubayr completely ignores seasickness.⁸⁴ Felix Fabri in the fifteenth century compensates by describing the discomforts and tedium of ship life, describing how passengers took turns picking lice off each other's bodies. Accounts of shipwreck are relatively common among the travelers but always dramatic.

Land travel was safer but slower. While a sailing ship could go 75 to 125 miles in a day, (and more than twice that speed in good wind with oarsmen) the traveler on foot could expect to cover between 15 and

⁸¹ Phillips, p.105.

⁸² A. Gâteau, "Quelques observations sur l'intérêt du voyage d'Ibn Jubayr," *Hesperis* 36/3-4 (1949) pp.289-312. Gâteau, pp.293-94 briefly reviews how Muslim law dealt with the problem of making the pilgrimage with the aid of unbelievers.

⁸³ Dalché, pp.103-05.

⁸⁴ Gâteau, p.299.

25 miles. Merchants on horses with baggage could expect to cover thirty to forty miles in a day ⁸⁵ Wealthy travelers rode, walking only if they intended to show humility. European men in considered riding in a wagon unmanly, though Ibn Jubayr thought riding through the desert in a litter was the height of convenience.⁸⁶

Through the Middle Ages, the technologies of transport improved in Europe. Horses were bred selectively and harnesses were improved and fitted with brakes. Padded saddles, stirrups and horseshoes became more common. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the compass and stern rudder helped steer ships that were becoming larger and more seaworthy.⁸⁷

Travelers carried their own provisions and kept money as close to their bodies as possible. A traveler who had a letter of recommendation carried it as well.

Pilgrim travelers to the holy places were usually able to find religious lodging. In the case of Jews, the system was informal, but the network was extensive. In the fifteenth century, Meshullam of Votlerra tells of staying with Jews in Egypt who had had some business dealings

⁸⁵ Norbert Ohler, The Medieval Traveller, translated from the German by Caroline Hillier, Woodbridge; Suffolk: Boydell, 1989, p.101.

⁸⁶ Ohler, p.29, Ibn Jubayr, Muhammad ibn Ahmad, The Travels of Ibn Jubayr, trans. R.J.C. Broadhurst, London: J. Cape, 1952, p.60.

⁸⁷ Ohler, p.125.

with his family. When he falls ill in Jerusalem, a local Jewish family cares for him until he recovers. Benjamin of Tudela comments on the hospitality of the Jews of France and Germany.

Christian pilgrims in Europe often stayed in monasteries. Extending hospitality was a financial drain, and sometimes churchmen needed strong reminders of their obligations.⁸⁸ But the Benedictine monasteries consistently fed and lodged travelers. A traveler might also stay at a guest house attached to a church, a hospital, or an inn.⁸⁹ Through the Middle Ages, hospitality, like other occupations in Europe, became increasingly professionalized. Most inns were small businesses. Some were built by authorities for public safety. In 1286, King Eric V Clipping of Denmark was unable to find lodging while traveling and was murdered as he slept in a barn. In 1396, Queen Margaretha I had inns built at four-mile intervals to prevent such a thing from happening again.⁹⁰ As in the modern world, busy regions and routes had many inns while isolated outposts had only a few, if any.

In the *Dar al-Islam*, the combination of a sprawling empire, busy trade routes and pilgrimage to Mecca (which will be given more attention below) spurred the development of *funduqs* and *khans*. A *funduq* or inn, often run by a charitable trust, generally had room for travelers as well

⁸⁸ Ohler, p.82.

⁸⁹ Ohler, pp.80-89.

as their animals. Larger inns which catered mainly to merchants also had warehousing facilities for storing goods. In medieval cities, *funduqs* might be segregated by nationality. For example, Cairo had a *funduq* for Venetians.⁹¹ Because these facilities were meeting places as well as inns, they sometimes took on the role of administrative centers. Ibn Battuta, traveling in 1326, writes about the alms tax being exacted on merchants at his lodging-place in northern Egypt.

At each of these stations there is a hostelry (*funduq*), which they call a *khan*, where travellers alight with their beasts, and outside each *khan* is a watering place and a shop at which the traveller may buy what is required for himself and his beast. Amongst these stations is the well-known place called Qatya, which the people pronounce Qatya, where *zakat* is collected from the merchants, their goods are examined, and their baggage most rigorously searched. There are government offices here, with officers, clerks, and

⁹⁰ Ohler, p.91.

⁹¹ See R. Le Tourneau, "Funduk" and N. Eliasséeff, "Khan" and "Manzil" in EI, as well as Olivia Remie Constable, Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain: the Commercial Realignment of the Iberian Peninsula, 900-1500, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p.64, and Eliyahu Ashtor, Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983, p.410.

notaries, and its daily revenue is a thousand gold dinars.⁹²

Despite the presence of authorities at central locations, the roads could be incredibly dangerous to the medieval traveler. Abbott Daniel traveled north from Jerusalem with a crusader king's army. Many merchants and pilgrims traveled in large groups for safety, and some even paid for armed escort. Of course, it was important to find a trustworthy guide. Meshullam of Volterra tells a suspenseful story of how he and his traveling companion were led off the road and nearly murdered by the man who was supposed to accompany them from Hebron to Jerusalem. But unsafe as the roads might be, the pilgrim continued on.

Pilgrimage

⁹² Ibn Battuta, The Travels of Ibn Battuta A.D. 1325-1354, translated with revisions and notes from the Arabic text edited by C. Defrémery and B.R. Sanguinetti, by H.A.R. Gibb and completed by C. F. Beckingham, 4 vols. (new series nos. 110,127, 141,178) London: Hakluyt Society, 1958-94, vol. 1, pp.71-72. Ibn Battuta, Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah, Texte Arabe, Accompagné d'une Traduction, C. Defrémery and B.R. Sanguinetti, 2 vols. Paris: Société Asiatique, 1926, vol.1, p.112 I will quote passages in translation in Gibb, then give their place in the original Defrémery and Sanguinetti.

Waves of pilgrims crossed the Mediterranean from Europe to the Middle East between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. Most of the Europeans were headed to Jerusalem. Muslims from Spain and North Africa also made the trip, but their ultimate destination was Mecca. These pilgrims followed old customs and created new ones. In writing about their experiences, they generated a whole new field of literature.

This study is about the new literature created by these pilgrims. To provide this literature with a context, we need to begin by establishing the role that pilgrimage played in medieval religious life. First, we will discuss pilgrimage in theoretical terms. Specifically, we will ask what religious benefit there is in moving from one place to another. Next, we will see how each of the Abrahamic faiths - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - put the theory of pilgrimage into practice in the Middle Ages. We will describe briefly the history and practice of medieval Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca and medieval Jewish and Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

These three religions are hardly unique in incorporating pilgrimage into their ritual. Pilgrimage is a spatial expression of spiritual closeness to God. Even believers in an incorporeal deity often describe the divine as having a body which needs a home. The believers then

build a house and visit it. This scenario applies particularly well to the Ka'ba in Mecca and to the Temple in Jerusalem.⁹³

It would be wrong to give the impression that all pilgrimage is to a central site endowed with universal significance. Though absolute numbers are practically nonexistent, it seems that especially in the Middle Ages, far more people visited grave sites and relics than central shrines. For most of the faithful, a visit to Mecca or Jerusalem involved a long, difficult, and expensive journey. Instead, the majority of pilgrims concentrated on physical reminders of holy people. On one level, these two types of pilgrimages appear very different. People who travel to the central shrines at Mecca and Jerusalem may be thinking in mundane terms such as territoriality and a home, but at least they are trying to visit God. Pilgrims who pray at graves or visit bits of bone from saints' bodies are directing their attention to human beings.

Actually, both sets of pilgrims are reaching for the same goal. Whether ascribing human characteristics to the divine or divine characteristics to humans, pilgrims strain against the boundary that separates heaven from earth. They believe that at some geographical

⁹³ F. E. Peters, Jerusalem and Mecca: The Typology of the Holy City in the Near East, New York, New York University Press, 1987, pp.5-10. For a slightly different approach, see H. Busse, "Jerusalem and Mecca, the Temple and the Kaaba: An Account of Their Interrelation in Islamic Times," in M. Sharon,

points, in some places, the line between human and divine is less defined, less rigid, and perhaps more permeable, than the division they know. Somehow, a few physical locations transcend the limits of the physical world and act as gateways to the spiritual one.⁹⁴ Pilgrimage is a search - sometimes institutionalized, sometimes informal, and sometimes even spontaneous - for these gateways. By its very nature, pilgrimage challenges the traditional line between physical and spiritual, between heaven and earth, and most significantly, between man and God.

On a social level, too, pilgrimage challenges notions of boundary and placement. Victor Turner, in his famous study "The Center Out There: Pilgrim's Goal," argues that pilgrimage itself is essentially a liminal phenomenon, outside the boundaries of place-specific religious and social roles. People go to a place that is far from the population center, perform a ritual activity of some kind, and then return home. This leaving and re-entering of society is perhaps as important an element in pilgrimage as the ritual itself. Some Christian pilgrims felt that a self-imposed exile would force the individual to face himself without

ed., Pillars of Smoke and Fire: The Holy Land in History and Thought, Johannesburg, 1986, pp.236-246.

⁹⁴ Perhaps this notion of windows to a higher level can also be applied to time as well as place. The concept of holy time merges with the time of holy place in the pilgrimage season. Muslims, Christians and Jews all tried to be in the holy places at holy times.

the background noise of a community. But Turner noted that along the route, pilgrims might form their own new social group, a *communitas*, subtly challenging the prevailing social order.⁹⁵ The formation of a new community may also happen at the site itself. For example, all male pilgrims to Mecca, regardless of status, don white clothing as part of the *hajj* ritual. Christian pilgrims too, were distinguished by their dress, though the marking took place at home, because for them the entire journey, the very leaving home, was part of the penitence. In both cases, the act of pilgrimage is accompanied by distinctive dress that unites the pilgrims while setting them apart from all others. Significantly, both Muslim and Jewish pilgrims in the Middle Ages traveled in large groups, often for security reasons. Jewish pilgrims, who did not distinguish themselves by their clothing, almost always traveled individually or in very small groups.⁹⁶

Pilgrimage, with uniforms, mores and rituals of its own, can be subversive of the social and religious orders. In the Christian world, where pilgrimage was not obligatory, religious authorities sometimes pointed out this unsettling aspect. Some authorities even opposed the practice of pilgrimage altogether. The objections were both social and

⁹⁵ Victor Turner, "The Center Out There: Pilgrim's Goal," *History of Religions* 12 (1973) pp.191-230.

spiritual. There could be improper, unsupervised mingling among aimless pilgrims. On religious grounds, the notion that an omnipresent god is more in one place than another makes no sense. Belief rather than geographical proximity ought to determine a person's closeness to the divine. Jerome wrote in a letter that "It is praiseworthy not to have been in Jerusalem but to have lived well for Jerusalem."⁹⁷ As it happens, he settled in the Holy Land. Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine, who both made pilgrimages, also both expressed reservations. Monks especially were discouraged from pilgrimage in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but they were not always dissuaded. Burchard of Mount Zion, in about 1280, was rather defensive about his decision to undertake the pilgrimage. If pagans like Plato and Apollonius could visit, he reasons, Christians should certainly do the same. Burchard continues that even Jews recognized the sanctity of Jerusalem. Burchard is of course referring to the Biblical Hebrews, not the Jews of his own era. (Medieval Jews did visit Jerusalem, but a medieval German priest would hardly consider using them as examples.) "The men of old venerated the Holy of Holies, because therein was the ark of the covenant, the

⁹⁶ There is a clothing-related aspect of Jewish pilgrimage. Pilgrims tear their clothes in mourning when they arrive at Jerusalem, a practice which will be discussed below.

⁹⁷ As quoted in Giles Constable, "Opposition to Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages," *Studia Gratiana* 19, 1 (1976) pp.123-146. See p.126.

cherubim..."⁹⁸ The holy places associated with Jesus are infused with value, so that "The memory of each and every one of these places is still as full and complete as it was on this day when these things were done therein."⁹⁹ John Poloner argues in the 1420's that pilgrimage is a way of intensifying the feelings of the faithful. "Having thus seen such places as are near at hand, we must now pass to those which are further off, that our devotional feeling may be increased."¹⁰⁰ But going "further off" in the early Middle Ages was not always easy, and safety was a major consideration for travelers from Europe, both Jewish and Christian.¹⁰¹ Still, the forces in favor of pilgrimage by far outweighed the voices against it in this era.

In the case of Islam, the ritual necessity of pilgrimage was taken for granted, except perhaps by some Sufi mystics. Travelers (and stay-at-homes) did notice the social effects of the *hajj* but tended to

⁹⁸ Burchard, p.2.

⁹⁹ Burchard, p.2.

¹⁰⁰ Poloner, p.16.

¹⁰¹ This was such a serious consideration that one late twelfth-century French rabbi argued that a law obligating a wife to follow her husband in settling in the Land of Israel might be temporarily suspended in part because of the dangers of travel. *Ketubot* 110b, s.v. "he says to immigrate", and E.E. Urbach, *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot: toldotehem, hiburehem, shitatam*, 2 vols., Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1980, vol.1, p.126 and n.13 there. A longer discussion can be found in Joshua Praver, *The History of the Jews in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, pp.145-149.

concentrate on its positive aspects. The picture of Muslims united in religious practice was not always rosy. Medieval opponents of non-essential religious travel (i.e. to cemeteries) considered improper social activity a serious problem. Notable among these opponents was Ibn al-Hajj (d.1336), an Egyptian Maliki jurist. He argued that the trip to the cemetery, as well as the unsupervised environment around the graves, was ripe with opportunity for inappropriate mixing of the sexes.¹⁰²

Cemeteries are popular as religious sites in part because of their proximity to local populations. Most believers lived far from the sites of obligatory pilgrimages - Mecca and Jerusalem were never major population centers - and so the cost of the journey kept the pilgrimage out of the reach of most people.¹⁰³ For Christian travelers, the expense of the journey - about 200 Venetian ducats for a Christian pilgrim to Jerusalem in the twelfth century¹⁰⁴ - meant that for the most part only the

¹⁰² Muhammad b. Muhammad Ibn al-Hajj, *Madkhal*, 4 vols., Cairo, 1929, vol.1, pp.266-69, and Christopher S. Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyara and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, p.58.

¹⁰³ It is nearly impossible to estimate what percentage of medieval Muslims made the hajj, but there is every reason to believe that it was a relatively select group.

¹⁰⁴ H. Savage, "Pilgrimage and Pilgrim Shrines in Palestine and Syria after 1095," *A History of the Crusades*, ed. K Sutton, vol.4, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1977, p.43.

rich or the clergy could consider the trip. From a strictly socio-economic standpoint, it would be hard to argue that wealthy pilgrims want or need to subvert the social order at home by going on pilgrimage. (If anything, they may have been trying to maintain their personal financial status by taking advantage of laws protecting a pilgrims property from seizure in his absence.) Perhaps their pilgrimages - or at least their written accounts of them - were in fact intended to strengthen the positions and attitudes of the elite, allowing the privileged classes of society to impose their vision of Jerusalem (which was just another way of talking about Europe) onto a wider audience.¹⁰⁵ Some have argued that the pilgrims themselves were not socially affected by the journey. "The pilgrim went out a Catholic Christian and returned a more rigid one."¹⁰⁶

Whether or not pilgrims were interested in changing or preserving the status quo, they seem, as individuals, to have been spiritually moved by the event. But as a group, pilgrims may have been doing more than visiting sacred sites. They may have been asserting power. Christian pilgrimages peaked under strong kings and popes; Tsarist Russia, France, Great Britain and Mamluk Egypt all made their mark on the Holy Land with large groups of pilgrims and with major

¹⁰⁵ Glenn Bowman, "Pilgrim Narratives of Jerusalem and the Holy Land: A Study in Ideological Distortion," in Alan Morinis, ed., Sacred Journeys: The anthropology of Pilgrimage, Westport, Connecticut; London, Greenwood Press, 1992. (Contributions to the Study of Anthropology 7)

building projects.¹⁰⁷ This assertiveness does not necessarily conflict with the *communitas* which Turner suggested. The pilgrims themselves were removed from power politics and forged an identity with their fellow pilgrims, but the political powers at home may have used pilgrims to solidify their own power bases. Such a struggle would be most apparent in Jerusalem, where the holy places of three faiths lie in close proximity, if not actual identity. But even in the case of Mecca, open to Muslims alone, pilgrimage took on political overtones. Caliphs and sultans sent coverings for the Ka'ba and lavished money on Mecca not only as an act of piety, but as a way of letting all pilgrims see their wealth and political standing.¹⁰⁸

Of course, even if all the pilgrims saw the same things, they might not understand or transmit their experiences in the same way. "There is a difference between the place where the Hajj rites occur and the places where the meaning of the place and its rites are constructed. Muslims, after all, go to Mecca with preconceptions formed within their native cultures. When they return home, they eventually make sense of their pilgrimage experiences in relation to indigenous forms of religious

¹⁰⁶ Savage, p.60.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas A. Idinopulos, "Sacred Space and Profane Power: Victor Turner and the Perspective of Holy Land Pilgrimage," in Bryan Le Beau and Menachem Mor, eds., Pilgrims and Travelers to the Holy Land, Studies in Jewish Civilisation 7, Creighton University Press, 1996.

¹⁰⁸ Peters, Jerusalem and Mecca, pp.50-51.

discourse.”¹⁰⁹ In other words, pilgrim records are about the pilgrim and his home, not just the pilgrimage. With pilgrims converging on Jerusalem and Mecca from so many places, it is no wonder that the “compelling facts of power, division, and violence that appear under any close study of pilgrimage”¹¹⁰ remain.

In general terms, pilgrimage is about the refusal to be restrained. Pilgrims look for a way to breach the fences between heaven and earth. They try to reinvent their social situations and perhaps assert power where they have none. As we shall see later, writing about the pilgrimage experience extends the power of the writer to redefine his world, even after the pilgrimage itself is over.

For all that pilgrimage is transgressive, specific pilgrimages are almost always highly scripted events. This is especially true of the *hajj*, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. Medieval Muslims, Christians and Jews all made pilgrimage to holy sites, but the Muslim experience was quite different from the other two. The *hajj* took place in an all-Muslim environment. More importantly, it was an obligation specifically commanded in the Qur’an (2:196). Muslims might also visit other

¹⁰⁹ Juan Eduardo Campo, “The Mecca Pilgrimage in the Formation of Islam in Modern Egypt,” in Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley, Sacred Places and Profane Spaces : Essays in the Geographics of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, New York: Greenwood Press, 1991. (Contributions to the Study of Religion #30) p.147.

religiously significant locations such as Medina and Jerusalem, but this kind of visit, a *ziyara*, did not have the status of the pilgrimage. It brought merit to the visitor, but did not take the place of the *hajj*.¹¹¹

Medieval Jewish and Christian visits to Jerusalem had more of the character of a *ziyara* than a *hajj*. That is, Christian and Jewish travelers visited places in order to revisit historical events. The fundamental difference between a medieval pilgrimage to Mecca and a pilgrimage to Jerusalem is the difference between a "place" in which the pilgrim is an actor, and a "place where", whose value is enhanced by events in the past.¹¹² Muslim travelers went on *hajj* in a present-oriented mode, while Christians and Jews went in commemoration of a sacred past. For Christians and Jews, the center was both "out there" and "back when". Mecca was "out there, right now". Though Mecca might look like an exception to the general rule that pilgrimage sites are peripheral, in fact it "is certainly peripheral to each and all of the many social and political systems into which Muslims have become secularly organized."¹¹³ In that sense, medieval Mecca was like medieval

¹¹⁰ Idinopulos, p.17.

¹¹¹ J. Wensinck, "Ziyara" El

¹¹² The distinction between "places" and "places where" comes from Campbell, p. 32.

¹¹³ Turner, p.213. Not everyone agrees. For example, M.N. Pearson, Pious Passengers: The Hajj in Earlier Times, London: Hurst & Co., 1994, p.15 insists that Mecca is central and that its rules are stricter than in ordinary

Jerusalem, its cultural position far inferior to its spiritual, ritual centrality.¹¹⁴

Despite some violent outbreaks and natural disasters, the *hajj* in the Middle Ages had continued uninterrupted (though not necessarily unchanged) from the time of Muhammad.¹¹⁵ The pilgrimage to Mecca and its rites (some of which predate Islam) followed very specific rules in a specific order, and there was a whole industry of pamphlets to guide pilgrims through the ritual. Though the voyage itself was not considered penitential, providing food and lodging for pilgrims along the route was considered a righteous thing to do.¹¹⁶ Ibn Jubayr in the twelfth century and Ibn Battuta in the fourteenth benefited from such hospitality and were sometimes offended when they were not offered the courtesy they considered due to pilgrims. As with Christian pilgrims, leaving home was a spiritual experience in itself. Though there was no need to ask permission, the would-be pilgrim had to formally declare his intention to

society. Pearson does not distinguish the ritual from the social, as an anthropologist like Turner does as a matter of course.

¹¹⁴ For a full discussion of the pilgrimage, see F.E. Peters, The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

¹¹⁵ Russel King, "The Pilgrimage to Mecca: Some Geographical and Historical Aspects," *Erdkunde* 26 (1972) pp.61-73.

¹¹⁶ William R. Roff, "Pilgrimage and the History of Religions: Theoretical Approaches to the Hajj," in Richard C. Martin, ed., Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies, Tuscon, 1985, pp.78-86.

perform the pilgrimage and discharge his debts. He might take with him a piece of cotton to be soaked in the water at Zamzam for future use as a shroud. All this gave the departure a "testamentary, or even funerary character."¹¹⁷

The *hajj* itself is to be performed in the month which takes its name from the ritual, *Dhu-'l-Hijja*, the last month of the lunar year. Upon passing through various checkpoints and arriving at Mecca, the pilgrim renews his statement of intention to perform the *hajj*. He shaves, trims his hair and nails, and puts on the *ihram*, a white garment without stitches or adornment.¹¹⁸ In this state, the pilgrim must abstain from hunting, arguing, uprooting living things, wearing perfume and jewelry and having sexual intercourse. The pilgrim circumambulates the Ka'ba seven times in a counterclockwise direction, if possible touching the black stone embedded in the corner of the Ka'ba. This walking around (*tawaf*) is followed by a short prayer and then the rite of *sa'y*, running

¹¹⁷ Roff, p.81. For a late 19th century picture of shrouds soaked in Zamzam water see Peters, *The Hajj*, ff. p.190, #15.

¹¹⁸ Women do not wear *ihram* garment but may also change into white clothes. There are records of a number of pilgrims from the seventh to ninth centuries who went to Jerusalem before Mecca and pronounced the *ihram* in Jerusalem. Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage*, Leiden: EJ Brill, 1995, pp.64-65. By doing this, they lengthen the state of *ihram* while at the same time asserting the ritual importance of Jerusalem.

back and forth between two hills in commemoration of Hagar's search for water for Ishmael.

The *tawaf*, prayer and *sa'y* make up the *'umra*, or "lesser *hajj*" which can be performed at any time of year. The end of this stage is marked with a symbolic cutting of the hair and nails. The official *hajj* continues, and on the ninth of the month of *Dhu-l-Hijja*, the pilgrims observe the main part of the pilgrimage by standing in meditation and praise at the Plain of 'Arafat from noon until sundown. (Ibn Jubayr complains of being rushed by tour guides anxious to return home before the traffic got too hectic.) From here, the pilgrims head straight for Muzdalifa for afternoon and evening prayers, and on the following day, the *'Id al-adha*, pilgrims slaughter and eat animals in ritual commemoration of Abraham's sacrifice of the ram. After the sacrifice, the pilgrims again have a token haircut, change from white *ihram* clothing back into their regular garments, and perform another circumambulation. The festival continues for three days, during which time pilgrims throw stones at a symbol of the devil. The pilgrimage ends with a final *tawaf*.

Most pilgrims continue on from Mecca to Medina for a visit to the tomb of Muhammad and some of the important sites of his life. The Muslim visit to Medina is not technically part of the pilgrimage. It is a holy visit, a *ziyara*, and provides the best Muslim parallel for Christian

pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Just as the *hajj*, with its intense ritual restrictions and time-bound rites, is not at all like the Christian tour of Jerusalem, the Muslim tour of Jerusalem was not nearly as intense as the Jewish or Christian one.

Muslim pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Hebron is an old and established custom. Though not obligatory, it was certainly praiseworthy, and traditions suggest that those who visit the tombs of Abraham and Muhammad in a single year are deserving of Paradise.¹¹⁹ Like the Christian or Jewish visitor, the Muslim pilgrim needed a guide to Jerusalem. The earliest known Muslim itinerary of Jerusalem's holy sites is by one Ibn al-Murajja, at the beginning of the 11th century, but the itinerary on which it is based may go back another hundred years. It lists about twenty places and the prayers said at each. However, it would be another five hundred years before a book would be written that

¹¹⁹ Amikam Elad, "Pilgrims and Pilgrimage to Hebron (al-Khalil) During the Early Muslim Period (638? -1099)," in Bryan Le Beau and Menachem Mor, eds., Pilgrims and Travelers to the Holy Land, Studies in Jewish Civilization 7, Creighton University Press, 1996, p.28. For a brief discussion of medieval Muslim praises of Jerusalem as compared with Christian ones, see E. Ashtor, "Muslim and Christian Literature in Praise of Jerusalem," The Jerusalem Cathedral ed. I. Levine, Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Institute; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981, vol. 1, pp.187-189.

was explicitly described by its author as a guide for Muslim visitors to Jerusalem, and this possibly under the influence of Christian guides.¹²⁰

Arabic literature praising Mecca and Medina appeared as early as the eighth century, and it is likely that praises of Jerusalem date to about the same time.¹²¹ As with Christian pilgrimage, not everyone was convinced that a visit to Jerusalem was necessary. One traditionalist stated that "even if the distance between me and Jerusalem was reduced to one or two parasangs, I would not go there nor would I wish to go [there and pray]."¹²² But the connection to the city was such that some people who could not make the visit themselves would at least send olive oil to illuminate the mosque in Jerusalem.¹²³

¹²⁰ Elad, Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship, 69-70, p.164 and 173. Also see H. Busse, 1986, pp.236-246. There is a list of Muslim holy places in Jerusalem in a work that is roughly contemporary with Ibn Jubayr. This is al-Harawi's Kitab al-Ziyarat, ed., Janine Sourdel-Thomine, Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1953.

¹²¹ Jonathan M. Bloom, "Jerusalem in Medieval Islamic Literature," in Nitza Rosovsky, ed., City of the Great King: Jerusalem from David to the Present, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1996, p.207-09. Historians tend to be skeptical of literature in praise of Jerusalem and to look for its political motivations. See Elad, Medieval Jerusalem, pp.6-22 for a thorough discussion of the literature through the tenth century and Ashtor for the later medieval period.

¹²² Bloom, p.209, quotes this from an unpublished article by I. Hasson, in *Sefer Yerushalayim*.

¹²³ Elad, Medieval Jerusalem, p.64.

And Muslims did visit Jerusalem, including the Persian Ibn al-Faqih in about 903 and the Spanish Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, in about 913. Nasir-i-Khusraw, a Persian traveler probably spying for the weakening Fatimid dynasty spent about five weeks in Jerusalem in 1047 and has left a detailed report filled with useful information about the city. (Including a good deal about its water supply and underground passages.)¹²⁴

Even when Jerusalem was under Crusader rule, and Muslims and Jews could not settle in the city, the occasional Muslim could visit. In about 1140, Usamah ibn Munqidh, a Syrian with good connections, visited Jerusalem, prayed at the Aqsa mosque and visited the Dome of the Rock. Ibn Jubayr was not able to visit, but he did set sail from Acre to Crete with a group of Christian pilgrims who had just been to Jerusalem.¹²⁵

The Christian pilgrims traveling with Ibn Jubayr were by no means an isolated group. Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem was immensely popular in the twelfth century despite the political instability of

¹²⁴ Bloom, p.213. See W.M. Thackston, Jr., Nasir-e Khosraw's Book of Travels (Safarnama), Persian Heritage Series, 36, New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1986, pp.21-38.

¹²⁵ Broadhurst, p.325 and Rihlat Ibn Jubayr: fi Misr wa-bilad al-'Arab wa-al-Iraq wa-al-Sham wa-Siqilliyyah 'asr al-Hurub al-Salibiyah, ed. Husayn Nasssar, Cairo: Maktabat Misr, 1992, p.393. Throughout this study, I will cite both the Broadhurst translation as well as the original in Nassar's edition.

the region, the expense and physical danger of travel, and the voluntary nature of the trip.

Gregory of Nyssa (ca.335-ca.394) observed that there is no religious obligation to visit the Holy Land.¹²⁶ The earliest Christians had very little opportunity to make such pilgrimages, though a few hardy individuals did. When the Roman Empire converted to Christianity in the fourth century, Jerusalem was a major beneficiary of the change. The emperor Constantine (dates) went to great expense to identify and bring attention to places associated with the life of Jesus. The tomb of Jesus was uncovered; new churches were constructed. As the religious buildings went up, so did the numbers of visitors. By the fourth century, pilgrimage had become a force in religious life. The first surviving firsthand account of a Christian pilgrim is by the "Bordeaux pilgrim" of 333, who mentions tersely every biblical site, no matter how minor. In the fourth century, Egeria, a nun who probably came from an aristocratic family in Spain, gives evidence of the new tourism or religious Christians. Whenever she comes to a holy site, she pulls out her Bible to read what happened there.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Epistola* 3.4, paragraphs 3-4. (Pasquali ed., p.14)

¹²⁷ For more on Egeria see the introduction to her *Travels*, trans. with supporting documents and notes by John Wilkinson, Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1999, 3rd ed., pp.2-4.

As Jerusalem became physically accessible to greater numbers of Christians, and as the religion as a whole began to make a place for itself in the temporal world, religious practice also took on material elements. "A new tactile piety that attached itself to things, to bones and relics, to places and shrines, to sacred books, even to liturgical implements such as chalices or veils, was evident all over the Christian world."¹²⁸ Pilgrimage was one manifestation of the growing trend of "tactile piety." After the Second Nicene Council decreed in 787 that a church needed relics in order to be consecrated, pilgrim traffic grew heavier (as did thefts of relics).

Pilgrims were not simply in search of relics. Many made the pilgrimage as a penance for their sins. This kind of pilgrimage was a sort of ad hoc obligation imposed by a church representative in the hopes that the combination of an arduous journey and the visit to a shrine could redeem the sinner.¹²⁹ The Celtic church was the first to officially consider pilgrimage a penance, and soon the practice spread from

¹²⁸ Robert L. Wilken, "Christian Pilgrimage to the Holy Land," in Nitza Rosovsky, ed., City of the Great King: Jerusalem from David to the Present, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1996, pp.131-132.

¹²⁹ The redemptive power of wandering "is in fact a development of the penalty of judicial exile which is so common in primitive legal systems. The offender became an outcast." Jonathan Sumption, Pilgrimage: an Image of Medieval Religion, London: Faber and Faber, 1975, repr. Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1975 and 1976, p.101.

Ireland through Europe. As the penitential system was formalized, pilgrimages became more popular. Generally, the more scandalous a person's sin, the longer the pilgrimage assigned to him. As penance for murdering a bishop, Roger da Bonito was sent in 1319 to Santiago, Rome and Jerusalem.¹³⁰

Some sins were not serious enough to warrant as strong a penance as pilgrimage, but a penitent who wanted to be sure his sins would be remitted might undertake a journey on his own. Robert the Pious, king of France, visited nine shrines in France before his death in 1031, hoping, according to his biographer, to "evade the awful sentence of the day of judgment." Guilt about major crimes could motivate extensive pilgrimage. Fulk Nerra of Anjou, a man whose many murders gave him much to feel guilty about, made three or four pilgrimages to Jerusalem at the beginning of the eleventh century.¹³¹ Robert, a duke of Normandy who was strongly suspected of having murdered his brother, made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem barefoot in 1035.¹³²

The eleventh century was the great age of pilgrimage, particularly from south-western France and the Rhineland, regions in

¹³⁰ Sumption, p. 100.

¹³¹ Sumption, p.101

¹³² Robert did not travel as an impoverished ascetic. Apparently he was such a lavish spender that the inhabitants of Constantinople assumed he was the king of France. Sumption, p,123.

which monastic piety was growing. The abbey of Cluny promoted pilgrimage to Santiago in Spain and was instrumental in composing the liturgy of that pilgrimage.¹³³ In the eleventh century, the church as a whole was extremely encouraging of pilgrimage.¹³⁴ The idea had grown that a formal visit to a particular shrine could literally erase a person's sins.¹³⁵ Jacques de Vitry, a famous preacher who wrote about his time in the Holy Land, liked to tell a story of two brothers. Though both were sinners, one was admitted to heaven because he had made a habit of visiting shrines.¹³⁶

Of course, not every Christian pilgrim to Jerusalem was motivated by a guilty conscience.¹³⁷ Some of the rise in pilgrimage came from apocalyptic trends of the millennium. Even if the millennium was

¹³³ Sumption, pp.119-121.

¹³⁴ Steven Runciman, "The Pilgrimages to Palestine before 1095," in Kenneth Setton, ed., A History of the Crusades, vol.1 (ed. Marshall Baldwin), Madison, Milwaukee, and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969, p.77.

¹³⁵ Sumption, p.103.

¹³⁶ Sumption, p.128.

¹³⁷ Even though the hajj is obligatory, it too may be prompted by repentance. A later, seventeenth-century, source suggests that Ibn Jubayr was moved to make his pilgrimage because he had sinned by drinking wine. Ian Netton quotes the *Nafh al-Tib* of al-Maqqari (d.1631 or 32) in "Ibn Jubayr : Penitent Pilgrim and Observant Traveler," *UR*, 2, 1985, p.14. For al-Maqqari's writings, see R. Dozy, G. Dugat, L. Krehl and W. Wright, eds., Annalectes sur l'histoire et la literature des Arabes d'Espagne, Amsterdam, Oriental Press, 1967, vol.1, p.741.

not necessarily a driving force, it provided additional impetus for pilgrimage.¹³⁸ In 1009, the fanatic and unstable Fatimid caliph al-Hakim (r.996-1021) destroyed the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and released some suppressed fears of imminent destruction. When the year 1033, said to be the thousandth anniversary of the crucifixion, began with famine and crop-destroying rainstorms in France, large numbers of Christians left France for the Holy Land.¹³⁹

These large groups of pilgrims were fortunate. At the turn of the millennium, travel from Western Europe to the Middle East was easier than it had been in a long time. From the tenth century onward, the rise of the Italian city-states and the need of Muslim rulers for tax revenues combined to facilitate trade as well as pilgrimage from Europe to the Middle East.¹⁴⁰ At the end of the tenth century, Hungary converted to Christianity and pilgrims from western Europe could now take a continuous Christian land route to Constantinople. William, count of Angoulême, was probably the first to take advantage of this route for a mass pilgrimage, leading a party to the Holy Land in 1026.¹⁴¹ The land

¹³⁸ Aryeh Grabois, "The Christian Pilgrimage in the Mediterranean during the Middle Ages and its Consciousness Projection," in The Mediterranean: Its Place in the History and Culture of the Jews and Other Nations, Historical Society of Israel, 1970. (Heb.)

¹³⁹ Sumption, p.133.

¹⁴⁰ Runciman, pp72-73.

¹⁴¹ Sumption, p.117.

route, though cheaper and safer than the sea route, was never the most popular. Most pilgrims preferred to go more quickly by sailing from Italy. Italian ships bore the traffic willingly, and at high prices. The profitability of the pilgrim trade did not escape the notice of the Fatimid, Mamluk and later Saljuq rulers in the Holy Land, who were generally open to the trade in travelers and its financial rewards. Christian pilgrims were not always able to travel freely, particularly during the Saljuq conquest of Anatolia in the twelfth century and under the reign of the erratic caliph al-Hakim (996-1021) in Egypt.¹⁴²

Medieval Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land is characterized by some interesting paradoxes. Pilgrimage reached the height of its popularity, and was easier than ever from the European end of things, just as Muslim powers made the pilgrimage more difficult.¹⁴³ Some large groups of pilgrims were still traveling at the end of the eleventh century - dramatically, some 7,000 Germans in 1064-65 led by the bishop of Bamberg. The crusades, the great military pilgrimages of the Middle Ages, managed to encourage individual pilgrimage to the Holy Land while inflaming local hostility to Western Christians.

In the fifteenth century, long after the last crusaders had left Acre in defeat, pilgrims from the lands of western Christendom

¹⁴² See Savage, p.59.

continued to arrive in Palestine in droves. Pilgrimage follows a logic of its own, rising and falling not with the conditions at the holy site, but with religious circumstances in the pilgrim's home. Pilgrimage starts with the pilgrim, not with his goal.

In fact, the pilgrim's needs sometimes overshadowed the spiritual requirements of Christian pilgrimage. Though pilgrimage ought to have represented a withdrawal from society, in fact Christian pilgrims, like their Muslim counterparts, tended to travel in large groups for security reasons and to create their own miniature societies along the way. In Felix Fabri's case, social stratification and national rivalries were transported almost unchanged across the Mediterranean. The divisions were sometimes disrupted by moments of intense religious emotion. For example, as Fabri's ship drew close to the shores of the Holy Land, the travelers all joined together in singing hymns.

A typical medieval Christian pilgrimage begins with the would-be pilgrim taking a vow to go on pilgrimage to a certain place. Then, he draws up a will, generally including a provision about how much time could elapse from his departure before he should be considered dead. (He might also agree with his wife how long she should wait after this point before remarrying.) Next, he pays his debts and settles any

¹⁴³ Phillips, p.29 suggests that this explains some of the enthusiasm in response to Urban II's speech at Clermont.

personal accounts. He asks permission of his local priest, who might forward the request to the bishop. Clerics are particularly bound to get permission of a superior before setting out. When permission is granted, the pilgrim is formally blessed and dressed. The dress of Christian pilgrims appears to have become standardized in the middle of eleventh century. It consisted of a wooden staff, a long coarse tunic marked with a cross, and a soft leather pouch, or scrip, for holding money and food. Some time in the eleventh century, the Church began to bless the pilgrim's pouch and mantle, an extension of the new practice of dubbing knights. In the thirteenth century, the pilgrim also wore a wide-brimmed hat turned up in front and attached to a scarf at the back. On the way home, the pilgrim would wear a badge indicating where he had been. A seashell showed that the pilgrim had been to Santiago; a palm represented Jerusalem.¹⁴⁴

In the Holy Land itself, Christian pilgrims had a fairly standard itinerary. The high point of the trip would be the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, but pilgrims also visited sites in and around Jerusalem that were associated with events in the life of Jesus. Where possible, the medieval Christian pilgrim tried to be in Jerusalem for Easter. Side trips to Bethlehem and bathing in the Jordan river were common, almost paralleling the Muslim's visit to Medina after the *hajj* at Mecca. The

¹⁴⁴ Sumption, pp.168-75. See also Savage, pp.43-45.

pilgrim generally saw all he had to see in about two weeks and then returned to Jaffa for the trip home. Some adventurous souls might also head out to Gaza, to St. Catherine's monastery at Sinai, and further to Cairo, thence to Alexandria to board a ship for Venice.¹⁴⁵

The enterprise of serving devout Christians was a major and efficient business. "One must conclude that, between Venetians, Moslems, and Franciscans, the pilgrimage business was on the whole well run. Despite all the complaints about delays and illicit charges, the pilgrim saw what he had come to see, and saw it in a brief time."¹⁴⁶

Sometimes the pilgrims felt that the trip was too brief and that they were being rushed through the sites. Felix Fabri, a German monk at the end of the fifteenth century, was so dissatisfied with the hurried pace of his first tour that he went back for another, longer one. He complained that on the first trip, the pilgrims "went the round of all the usual holy places in a great hurry, working day and night at the

¹⁴⁵ Gerhard Weiss, "The Pilgrim as Tourist: Travels to the Holy Land as Reflected in the Published Accounts of German Pilgrims Between 1450 and 1550," in M.J. Chiat and K.L. Reyerson, eds., The Medieval Mediterranean: Cross-cultural Contacts, St. Cloud: North Star Press, 1988. (Medieval Studies at Minnesota, 3) gives the itinerary popular at that time, but earlier pilgrims took roughly the same tour.

¹⁴⁶Savage, p.59.

accomplishment of our pilgrimage, so that we were hardly given any time for rest. "¹⁴⁷

Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem had evolved over a thousand years from the pious expression of a few individuals into a highly structured system of organized visits. Meanwhile, Jewish pilgrimage had evolved in the opposite direction. In the period of the Second Commonwealth (538 BCE to 70 CE), Jewish pilgrimage to Jerusalem was a communal obligation in response to the biblical commandment for all males to come to the city three times a year for the festivals. (Deut. 16: 16) The city was equipped to handle the influx.¹⁴⁸ Further ritual obligations might entail a visit to Jerusalem at other times of the year as well. After the Second Temple was destroyed in 70, some Jews who

¹⁴⁷ Felix Fabri, The Book of the Wanderings of Brother Felix Fabri, trans. Aubrey Stewart, PPTS, vols.7-10, vol.7, p.24.

¹⁴⁸ Wilken, p121. mentions an inscription found on a building in Jerusalem that dates roughly to the time of Herod (41-4 B.C.E.) "For the reading of the Torah and the study of the commandments, and the hostel and the rooms and the water installations, for needy travelers from foreign lands." The building seems to have been a synagogue with lodging quarters on the roof. See also M. Schwalbe, "Greek Inscriptions in Jerusalem," in Michael Avi-Yonah, ed., Sepher Yerushalaym vol.1, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Bialik Institute and Dvir Publishing House, 1956. When the second Temple was destroyed in 70 CE, Jews continued to visit the city, but now it was to mourn its destruction.

lived near Jerusalem continued visiting in fulfillment of rituals that did not require a standing temple.¹⁴⁹

From this point onward, visiting Jerusalem was a voluntary act, not a religious requirement. By the beginning of the Byzantine period (324-638) Jewish visitors came to Jerusalem almost exclusively to mourn its destruction. They were free to visit the temple mount on the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Ab, the anniversary of the temple's destruction. Both the Bordeaux pilgrim and Jerome in the fourth century offer disdainful Christian accounts of these mourners.

Mourning the loss of the Temple and its rites required rituals of its own. The rabbis of the Talmud, while setting out the rules of mourning, discussed precisely how the Jewish visitor to Jerusalem ought to behave. He should recite verses from Isaiah and Jeremiah relating to the destruction of the city and he should tear his garments. The temple and the city should be mourned separately as two distinct entities.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ For example, some Jews continued to bring the *maaser sheni*, a "second tithe" which was eaten in Jerusalem. See A'hron Oppenheimer, "Terumot and Ma'aserot" in EJ.

¹⁵⁰ *Moed Qatan* 26a.

Over the following years, the ritual was apparently expanded. Some people had a specific liturgy for each of the city's gates.¹⁵¹ A text from the Cairo geniza shows a set medieval ritual which combines mourning with thanksgiving.

If you are worthy to go up to Jerusalem, when you look at the city from Mount Scopus [you should observe the following procedure]. If you are riding on a donkey step down; if you are on foot, take off your sandals, then rending your garment say: "This [our] sanctuary was destroyed"...When you arrive in the city continue to rend your garments for the temple and the people and the house of Israel. Then pray saying: "May the Lord our God be exalted" and "Let us worship at his footstool...We give you thanks, O Lord our God, that you have given us life, brought us to this point, and made us worthy to enter your house"...Then return and circle all the gates of the city and go round all its corners, make a circuit and count its towers.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ J. Mann, Texts and Studies in Jewish History Literature 2 vols., Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1931, vol.2, pp.464-65. The liturgy was reprinted in L.N. Goldfeld, ed., *Salawat al-Abuab fi'l-Quds, Ha'aretz*, 19 May 1972.

¹⁵² M. Margolioth, Halakhoth on the Land of Israel from the Genizah, Jerusalem, 1974, pp. 139-141, (Heb) as quoted in Wilken, p.123. I have not been able to get the original.

By the seventh century, when Jerusalem had come under Muslim rule and Jews returned to the city, there is evidence of larger number of Jewish pilgrims. Their visits were not exclusively for mourning. The Jerusalem Yeshiva led an annual assembly on *Hoshannah Rabah* in which a procession of Jews would go through the city, around the Temple Mount and up the Mount of Olives. They would then circle the Mount of Olives seven times, singing and praying as they went. Echoing the temple pilgrimage, the *kohanim*, priests, led the way. Permission for this ritual was expensive, but it continued even after the Fatimid conquest in 970 ushered in a general decline in the city's Jewish life. The last known *Hoshannah Rabah* procession in Jerusalem was held in 1062. When the Jerusalem Yeshiva moved to Tyre in 1073, it took its leadership along. In 1081 the Hoshannah Rabah assembly was held in Tyre.¹⁵³ (Not to make too much of this, but I see this as text overtaking place, a major theme in medieval pilgrim literature.)

Under the Crusaders, as under the Byzantines, Jews were presumably not allowed to live in Jerusalem. With Christian control,

¹⁵³ Mark Friedman, "Jewish Pilgrimage after the Destruction of the Second Temple," in Nitza Rosovsky, ed., City of the Great King: Jerusalem from David to the Present, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1996, pp.140-41. Also Moshe Gil, "Aliya and Pilgrimage in the Early

Jews from Muslim countries had a difficult time visiting, while Jews from the Christian world could benefit from easier maritime access. Apparently they said prayers near the Temple Mount or the Mount of Olives. Benjamin of Tudela and Petahia of Ratisbon both belong to this period.

After Saladin's victory in 1187, Jews were encouraged to settle, and a large number, between one and three hundred, came from France en masse in 1211.¹⁵⁴ Among the new immigrants were some of the major rabbinic figures of the day. For example, Rabbi Yehiel of Paris, whose disputation with Nicholas Donin ended in the burning of the Talmud, arrived in the 1250's. Jews also came from Egypt and North Africa.

As the crusaders lost ground in the Middle East, the logistics of getting there from Western Europe became more difficult. But some Jews visited and even settled in the Holy Land. As Nachmanides found when he visited in 1267, there was very little to see, and only two Jews lived in the city. It is perhaps not surprising that in the thirteenth century,

Arab Period (634-1009)," in The Jerusalem Cathedra vol. 3, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1983, pp.162-191.

¹⁵⁴ S.D. Goitein, "Genizah Sources for the Crusader Period," in B.Z. Kedar et al, eds., Outremer: Studies in the History of the Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem, Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1982.

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pilgrims take a sort of messianic tone, and begin visiting the tombs of David and Solomon, hoping for an ultimate redemption.¹⁵⁵

From the thirteenth century on, Jewish immigration from the west was "essentially elitist."¹⁵⁶ Meanwhile, Jews from Muslim countries treated the visit to the Holy Land as a *ziyara*. It was a popular religious practice among all levels of Jewish society to visit holy places, especially tombs of the sages, during the Jewish holidays. At first the visits seemed to have been timed for Sukkot, like the Hosannah Rabah festivities of the early Muslim era, but in the fifteenth century, Jewish visitors seem to come for Passover and Shavuot, perhaps influenced by Christians coming to celebrate Easter and by Muslims arriving for the feast of Nebi Musa, and perhaps to take advantage of caravans headed in that direction. The 15th century *ziyara* also involved a visit to Ramah, where the prophet Samuel is said to be buried, and to Meron, for the graves of Hillel and Shammai.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Friedman, "Jewish Pilgrimage," p.144, quoting Avraham Ya'ari, *Igrot Eretz Yisrael*, Ramat Gan: Masada, 1971, pp. 47-8, 51. Prawer, p.245 also sees messianic overtones in some itineraries of the age.

¹⁵⁶ Friedman, "Jewish Pilgrimage," p.143.

¹⁵⁷ Rabbi Jacob the Emissary, in the middle of the thirteenth century, is among the travelers who describe the area and its many attractions. Elkan Natan Adler, ed. and intro., *Jewish Travellers*, London, 1925, 2nd ed., New York: Hermon Press, 1966, p.122, J.D. Eisenstein, ed., *Ozar Massaoth: A Collection of Itineraries by Jewish Travellers to Palestine, Syria, Egypt and Other Countries*, New York, 1926, repr. Tel Aviv, 1969, p.68. As with Ibn

The Jewish holy sites were clustered around the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and the Tomb of the Patriarchs at Hebron. At Jerusalem, the travelers may have ritually visited each of the gates of the city and said prayers.¹⁵⁸ Jerusalem was not the only locus of Jewish pilgrimage, as evidenced by the talmudic discussion of what to say in certain places marked by famous historical events. The Mishna (*Berakoth* 9:1) says that a blessing should be recited in a place where special things happened to the Jewish people. The Talmud discusses what to say if a person sees the place where the Jews crossed the Red Sea, the place where the wall of Jericho stood before collapsing, or the pillar of salt that Lot's wife had become.¹⁵⁹ Obviously, these places were considered known and "visitable" to Jews between the fourth and sixth centuries. In the later Middle Ages, much of the tour was spent in the Galilee region. In any case, Jewish law was more concerned with living in and moving to the Holy Land than with temporary visiting, even though not all visitors to the Holy Land were interested in relocating there permanently.

Jubayr and Ibn Battuta, I will cite first the Hebrew accounts first in translation and then in the original. The visit to Meron continues, celebrated annually to commemorate the death of R. Shimon bar Yohai. The current custom of taking young boys to Meron for a first haircut can be traced to the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. See "Hillula de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai," in EJ.

¹⁵⁸ Praver, p.173 n.6.

¹⁵⁹ *Berakhot* 54a.

No single reason explains why Jews traveled to the Holy Land in the Middle Ages. Obviously, they felt connected to the land, and this connection was reinforced by liturgy and literature. Often the pilgrim was referred to as a *hoge*, "pilgrim celebrant", and he tried to be in Jerusalem for the High Holy Day season in the fall, sometimes to celebrate on *Hashannah Rabah*, when that ceremony still took place. Pilgrims themselves tend not to specify why they went on pilgrimage (as, for example, Benjamin of Tudela, who was probably on a commercial venture even though he reported on the holy sites). When they do give their motivation, it is usually to explain that they "wish to contemplate and pray at the graves of the Patriarchs, the righteous and the saints of the Holy Land, and to our holy and glorious Temple wherein our fathers prayed in Jerusalem. May it be rebuilt, and established soon in our days."¹⁶⁰

It is hard to argue that Jews in the Middle Ages went to visit or settle in the Holy Land only because of persecution or economic difficulties at home. Some waves of immigration did follow this pattern. In 1349, German Jews came to Israel to escape the Black Plague, some Spanish Jews left their country because of harsh anti-Jewish measures in 1391, and again following persecution in 1497. The different ethnic groups of Jews were not always happy together.

¹⁶⁰ Rabbi Jacob, messenger of Rabbi Yehiel of Paris, 13th cent, quoted in Adler,

Eventually the Jews of Spain dominated, numerically and culturally. By the sixteenth century, Safed overtook Jerusalem as the major center of Jewish population and intellectual activity in the Holy Land. As in the case of Christian pilgrims, waves of pilgrimage and migration do not necessarily increase or decrease in relation to straitened circumstances. Even assuming that the pilgrim survived the voyage, the Middle East was hardly a peaceful place.

Whether they were planning to visit for a short while or to settle permanently, medieval Jews almost always referred to the holy graves as the main attraction. They assigned almost equal importance to graves of Biblical figures and graves of pious individuals from the recent past. The focus on grave sites, particularly of the post-Biblical era, is probably a way of staking a claim to the land. As Joshua Prawer explains, "This claim to the Holy Land, the belief in its inalienability, is strengthened by permanent divine intervention and the miraculous events which happen there every day. God's providence guards the tombs of the holy men from the sacrilege of being touched by the gentiles (Muslims and Christians alike). Only Jews can approach them. This led clearly to an antagonistic attitude to the powers prevailing in the land - in the twelfth century, anti-Christian, in the thirteenth, anti-Muslim -

p.115, Eisenstein, p.66.

but the object of the antagonism was in fact of no matter as long as the prerogatives of Israel were guarded.”¹⁶¹

Medieval Jewish pilgrimage, whether to Jerusalem or especially to other areas of the Holy Land, was not a regular, ongoing and organized system, as it was for Christians in the Holy Land or Muslims in the Hijaz. Jewish pilgrimage does not re-enact a history or follow a set path. Rather, Jewish pilgrims look to history and historical personalities for inspiration that the future redemption will come, and with it the rededication of the temple with its obligatory pilgrimage rites.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Prawer, p.174.

¹⁶² Friedman, “Jewish Pilgrimage,” p.146.

CHAPTER TWO - TEXT

We have already established that Muslims, Christians and Jews all had a tradition of pilgrimage, but that only the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca was obligatory. The immediate individual motivation for pilgrimage remains an open question about Christians and Jews, and even Muslim travelers could have multiple motivations. Since we are studying written accounts of pilgrimage, the next question is about the motivation for writing, that is, whether the pilgrim planned on writing down his travels for others or whether the written account is more incidentally textual, perhaps having been transcribed as the traveler told his adventures to an audience. Whether the traveler wrote consciously or had his words copied down, he had already mentally edited his information. He could not possibly report on everything he had seen and done along his trip, so his account reflects what he thought was worth knowing, and what was worth researching. Pilgrim writers actively gathered and processed their information, often bearing in mind the needs of their audiences.

Why they traveled

Even someone who is obligated to make a pilgrimage still needs an immediate cause for actually packing his bags and going. According to a seventeenth-century source, when Ibn Jubayr (b.1145) was secretary to Abu Sa'id 'Uthman b. 'Abd al-Mu'min, the Governor of Granada, his employer forced him to drink seven cups of wine, then repented and filled the subordinate's cup seven times with gold. Ibn Jubayr used the money to make a sort of penitential pilgrimage to Mecca. The trip lasted a bit over two years, from 1183 to 1185. (He also made two later trips.) Ibn Jubayr himself does not mention the drinking incident anywhere in his long and detailed book, but this late and probably spurious story underscores the expectation that obligation alone does not always provide enough motivation for undertaking a pilgrimage.¹

Certainly, Ibn Jubayr wants to make clear to his readers that his journey was motivated entirely by the desire to perform the *haji*. Always primly pious, Ibn Jubayr defends himself against any suspicion of curiosity. One can almost hear the sigh of relief in his voice at the end of

¹ For the story, see note 137 above.

the chapter on Medina. "There remained no hope or purpose of our blessed journey that we had not satisfied, no object we had not achieved, and our thoughts were freed to think of return to our native land. May God unite us with those we have left behind, and complete thereby His favor toward us."² About one hundred and fifty years later, the Moroccan Ibn Battuta took a distinctly different approach. Once he recovers from his initial homesickness, he revels in his wanderlust and makes a point of trying not to take the same route twice in his twenty-four years away from home. Ibn Battuta, Ibn Jubayr and other Muslim travelers are less constrained than Christian travelers of the age in that they do not really have to justify their travels. If the *hajj* were not enough, the study tour was a thoroughly respectable, and even desirable pursuit for a Muslim scholar.

A famous tradition of Muhammad instructs Muslims to "seek knowledge even as far as China" and the instruction was taken to heart. Ian Netton has observed that travel in search of knowledge (*talab al-'ilm*) "became a cliché of mediaeval Islamic life."³ Numbers are difficult to come by, but it is clear that study travel was a major force in the world of

² Broadhurst, p.197, Nassar, p.320.

³ Netton, 1996, p.vii.

medieval Islam.⁴ Travel for the sake of study was a “normative feature of medieval Muslim education”⁵ at least until the twelfth century, when Ibn Jubayr traveled. A study tour was almost obligatory for would-be religious officials in Muslim Spain⁶ and up to forty percent of the *‘ulama* class of fifteenth-century Cairo may have been born outside Egypt.⁷ But Egyptian-born scholars, with plenty of local teachers and no Christian neighbors, were far less likely than Andalusians to travel.⁸ Travel was not an end in itself; it was a conduit for the movement of sacred knowledge. If curiosity about the larger Islamic world was a motivation for the pilgrimage or study tour, it was generally left unexpressed.

Christian pilgrims were more ambivalent about travel. Though medieval Christians had any number of reasons for undertaking

⁴ Franz Rosenthal, “The Stranger in Medieval Islam,” *Arabica* 44 (Jan. 1997) pp.35-75, discusses the category of ‘stranger’ as portrayed in the literature of the medieval Islamic world.

⁵ Sam I. Gellens, “The search for knowledge in medieval Muslim societies: a comparative approach,” in Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori, eds., Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, migration and the religious imagination, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990.

⁶ Michael Karl Lenker, “The Importance of the *Rihla* for the Islamization of Spain,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1982.

⁷ C.F. Petry, The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, p. 411, n.4.

⁸ Gellens, p.62 notes that scholars from Nishapur were more likely than Egyptians to travel for study, but were still far less traveled than Andalusian *‘ulama*.

pilgrimage (obligation, penance, fulfillment of a vow), curiosity and wanderlust certainly figured into the decision. The medieval church did not generally regard curiosity as a meritorious motivation for pilgrimage. A study of pilgrimage in 14th century England devoted entirely to the rise of curiosity as a reason for travel points out that curiosity was a vice, denounced by churchmen including Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas Aquinas.⁹ Jacques de Vitry (d.1240), a religious leader who was an active participant in the Crusades and served as Bishop of Acre and Jerusalem, among other positions, was a wildly successful preacher of the Crusades, who nonetheless had a dim opinion of pleasure-travelers. "Some light-minded persons went on pilgrimage to the holy places, not so much out of devotion as out of curiosity and love of novelty, that they might travel to unknown lands, and with great toil might prove the truth of the strange and, to the ignorant, miraculous stories which they had heard about the East."¹⁰ Immediately after this sober denunciation, he admits that "Indeed, God hath wrought many wondrous works in these parts, which just, wise, and right-thinking men turn to the praise and

⁹ Christian K. Zacher, Curiosity and Pilgrimage: The Literature of Discovery in Fourteenth-Century England, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, pp. 24-29.

¹⁰ Jacques De Vitry, The History of Jerusalem, trans. Aubrey Stewart, PPTS vol.11, p.91.

glory of God...A few of these we have thought fit to add to this present work, as they may be of profit to diligent and studious readers."¹¹

Not every priest was bothered by the tension between "the transcendental vision of pilgrimage and the open-ended process which typically characterizes modernity."¹² Ludolph von Suchem, in the middle of the fourteenth century, for example, clearly approved of sight-seeing. Ludolph points out to his reader that the experience of a ship voyage, going straight across the Mediterranean, is quite different from being in a galley which stops every night and ensures fresh food and sightseeing. "Now while the galley is journeying thus along the shore, one sees numberless exceeding fair places, cities, towns and castles, and more especially all those places which in a ship are only seen afar off are seen close at hand from a galley and minutely scanned by the eyes. "¹³

Felix Fabri, at the end of the fifteenth century, loved to get a close view of things. For example, he sneaked around the supposed burial places of David and Solomon in the dead of night searching for the legendary treasures buried there.¹⁴ Still, he hid his early desire for a

¹¹ De Vitry, p.91.

¹² Elsner and Rubiés, eds., p.5.

¹³ Ludolph von Suchem, Description of the Holy Land and of the way thither, trans. Aubrey Stewart, PPTS, vol.12, p.20.

¹⁴ Fabri, vol.7, pp.301-305.

second pilgrimage so his fellow monks would not think him "guilty of the sin of idle curiosity."¹⁵ Fabri was among the last people who would have to worry about such a charge. Already in his lifetime, attitudes to travel and observation had begun to change, though it would still be a while before the "culture of the eye was institutionalized."¹⁶ Toward the end of the Middle Ages, European Christian travelers show "a shift in motivation that was eventually to distinguish the Renaissance voyager from the medieval pilgrim."¹⁷ The tension between old and new orientations is embodied in a work like "The Book of John Mandeville" which combines pilgrimage with exploration and ethnography. This fantastic representation of the east as seen by a curious pilgrim was an international best-seller in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁸ But just as maps were aiming for greater accuracy in representing the

¹⁵ Fabri, vol.7, p.49, and quoted in Zacher, p.55. Fabri groups idle curiosity with light-mindedness and other "temptations of the devil".

¹⁶ Zweder von Martels, ed., Travel Fact and Travel Fiction: Studies on Fiction, Literary Tradition, Scholarly Discovery and Observation in Travel Writing, Leiden: EJ Brill, 1994, p.xii.

¹⁷ J. G. Davies, "Pilgrimage and Crusade Literature," in Barbara N. Sargent-Baur, ed., Journeys Toward God: Pilgrimage and Crusade, Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1992, p.11.

¹⁸ J.G. Davies, Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today Why? Where? How? London: SCM Press, 1988, p.86 and Zacher, p.130. There is a significant literature on Mandeville. Especially interesting is Iain Macleod Higgins, Writing East:

physical world, so were travel accounts. Mandeville's book (which is not really in book form and may not have been written by a man named Mandeville) represents the pull of the fantastic against the description of the realistic.

The tension between travel as fact and travel as basis for fantasy had played itself out much earlier and very differently in Muslim travel literature when ninth century factual information about India and China, necessary for establishing commercial ties, became the basis of fictional writings.¹⁹ Some of these share the fantastic aspects of a work like Mandeville's.

There is no Jewish counterpart to Mandeville: medieval Jewish accounts tend to read like the Christian *itineraria* whose style they borrow. For the most part, the motivations for travel are familiar - the voluntary pilgrimage to holy sites, especially tombs, and, to a far lesser extent, the desire to study from new books and with new teachers.

The most famous of all medieval Jewish travelers has kept people guessing for generations about his motivation. Benjamin ben Yonah did not set out from Tudela at the end of the twelfth century simply to do a standard "tombstone tour" punctuated with sites of

The "Travels" of Sir John Mandeville, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

miracles. Benjamin points out industries, taxes and Jewish populations in the towns he visits. But he also tours the mosque of Damascus and the Coliseum in Rome, and mentions pilgrimage sites for non-Jews. He writes about the grave of Ali and the Abbey of St. Aegidius, once the home of an eighth-century hermit more commonly known as St. Giles, and "a place of pilgrimage of the Gentiles who come hither from the ends of the earth."²⁰ Unlike these people, however, Benjamin was not simply planning a pilgrimage. He visits and then leaves "Trani on the sea, where all the pilgrims gather to go to Jerusalem; for the port is a convenient one."²¹ His discussion of Jerusalem is barely focused on religion and ritual. He offers very specific information about a pearl fishery in Qatifa which "belongs to the king of the country, but is controlled by a Jewish official."²² Maybe Benjamin really wants to focus

¹⁹ Maria Kowalska, "From facts to literary fiction: medieval Arabic travel literature," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5-6 (1987-88) pp.397-403.

²⁰ Benjamin of Tudela, The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela, Travels in the Middle Ages, intro. Michael A. Signer, 1983, Marcus Nathan Adler, 1907, and A. Asher, 1840, New York: Joseph Simon, 1983, p.61, Eisenstein, p.19. Benjamin refers to it not as a place of pilgrimage but as a place of *ta'ut* - error.

²¹ Signer, p.66. Eisenstein, p.21. Again, Christian pilgrims are called *to'im* - mistaken ones.

²² Signer, p.119. Eisenstein, p.39. Benjamin is one of the earliest Europeans to comment on the pearl industry in the Persian Gulf, though naturally it was well-known among Arab writers. The Moroccan Ibn Battuta also visited Bahrain but may not have been there at a good time of year to observe pearl fishing. See R.A. Donkin, Beyond price: pearls and pearl-fishing: origins to

on trade or maybe that is all he knows about Qatifa because the Jews he spoke with knew of this Jewish pearl merchant.

In other words, Benjamin is as interested in the present as in the past. This has led to some speculation about the purpose of his trip (trade, a consolation over the fact that the Messiah had not yet arrived, scouting out new areas of settlement in the East should Christian Europe become too difficult a place for Jews to stay) all of which is predicated on the idea that really, people visit the Middle East to discover what was. A traveler concerned with the present must have some hope of tangible gain, or else why else would he visit? Modern readers almost automatically rule out the possibility of ethnographic and/or geographical interest. It may very well be true that Benjamin was on a trading voyage, especially when one considers his near-obsessive attention to the waterways close to all the cities he visits, but the exclusion of travel for the sake of curiosity says something about twentieth-century images of the medieval mind.²³

the Age of Discovery, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1998, pp.123-24, and (Abi al-Husayn Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Ali) Mas'udi, Muruj al-dhahab wa-ma'adin al-jawhar, ed. Yusuf Daghir, Beirut: Dar al-Andalus, 1965-66, p.126.

²³ Introduction to Signer, pp.13-30. Jane Gerber has suggested in conversation that Benjamin may have been a textile dyer. He certainly pays close attention to different phases of the textile industry.

Meshullam of Volterra (1481) does not tell his readers exactly why he went on his voyage either. Because he mentions wearing a ring that he took as a pledge, he may be transacting business. But that is not the only point of the trip. Leaving Egypt, Meshullam writes, "may it be the Almighty's will that I may reach Jerusalem and fulfill my vows (*va'ashalem nedarai*), and that he may let me go back to my house in life and joy and peace."²⁴ Mixing business with pilgrimage seems to have been completely natural to him. Certainly he was prepared to visit the holy city, because when he arrived he tore his clothes according to custom "and in the bitterness of my heart recited the appropriate prayer which I had in a small book."²⁵ Yet while in Jerusalem he fell ill, and had to compress all his sight-seeing into two days. Luckily for him, all the places are close together, so a rushed tour is possible. But Jerusalem is clearly the focus of his trip. Meshullam seems to have timed his stay in Jerusalem to have coincided with the High Holy Days. Perhaps because he was ill, he does not mention specifically spending the New Year with the community in Jerusalem.²⁶ When Meshullam leaves for

²⁴ Adler, p.174, Eisenstein, p.94. The language here may be figurative, but it may be that Meshullam had vowed, like many Christian travelers and possibly like Ibn Jubayr, to make the pilgrimage as a kind of penance.

²⁵ Adler, p.189, Eisenstein, p.99.

²⁶ His whereabouts on *Rosh HaShanah* have to be deduced from Christian dates. If September 12 was one of the intermediate days of *Sukkot*, then

Beirut he is heading home, and at the very end of the book, possibly added by an editor, is a calculation of the distance from the starting point of Naples to Jerusalem, as well as a calculation of the round-trip mileage.

Other Jewish travelers focused primarily on the graves of holy men. Apparently the major burial sites were along well-known routes. Petahia of Ratisbon got from a certain Rabbi Samuel, head of the academy at Nehardea a list of all the grave sites of the famous sages of the east as well as a safe-conduct pass or letter of introduction. Unfortunately for future readers, Petahia lost the list of graves along the way.²⁷

Along with seeing grave sites, travelers might have other motivations for their visits. Rabbi Isaac Chelo (1334) does not explain the purpose of his trip but his interest is broader than just holy graves. Perhaps he was on a Muslim-style study tour. This might explain some of his fascination with interesting books and rare editions.

Rabbi Jacob was sent by Rabbi Yehiel of Paris to raise money from Jews in Israel for the Yeshiva of Paris, which had been recently

when he left Jerusalem on August 26, *Rosh HaShanah* would have already ended. Adler pp.196-201, Eisenstein, p.102.

²⁷ Adler, pp.73 and 78, Eisenstein, pp.50 and 52.

reconstituted in Acre.²⁸ Samuel bar Samson may have written his account with an eye to attracting Jewish settlement in Jerusalem. This brings us to the next issue - how did the purpose of travel affect the writing of a travel account?

Why they wrote

The traveler and his audience are more closely linked than most writers and readers. Travel, almost by definition, generates literature. People need to identify themselves, and place is one of the strongest possible markers of identity. Like a reader immersed in a book, the traveler is removed from society and forced to navigate with a new set of

²⁸ Rabbi Yehiel ben Joseph of Paris was a famous Talmudist and Jewish protagonist in the famous Jewish-Christian disputation held at the court of Louis IX. Following the disputation, copies of the Talmud were burned in Paris in 1242. In about 1259, Rabbi Yehiel, along with many of his disciples and possibly his son, emigrated to the Land of Israel, settling in Acre and establishing a yeshiva there. Recently it has become clear that Rabbi Yehiel died en route to Israel. See Israel Moses Ta-Shma, "Yehiel b. Joseph of Paris" in *EJ and Prawer* pp.150-52, especially nn.65-70. In any case, the new yeshiva in Acre was named for Rabbi Yehiel. Rabbi Jacob was probably a professional fund raiser for the yeshiva in Acre. which had to send to Europe for financial help. The yeshiva, though famous, lasted less than 75 years. *Prawer*, pp.275-76 and nn. 66-68. The circumstances of Jacob's

guideposts.²⁹ The traveler is no place. His displacement can be eased by recording his place through a medium that transcends time. So, he can tell his story or write it down. There is a near-ritual quality to the returned traveler's report of where he has been and what he has been doing. In oral accounts, this ritual aspect is especially clear.³⁰ A written account loses some of the immediacy of a person reporting to his peers. But whether written or oral, textual or told, the traveler's report is "a universally obligatory ritual linked to any activity of travelling to real or imaginary distant places."³¹

The level of displacement seems proportionally related to the need to retell the experience. It has been estimated that between 1100 and 1500, some 526 Christian pilgrims produced travel accounts of their pilgrimages to Jerusalem.³² Pilgrimage to Mecca did not generate anywhere near the amount of writing that Christian pilgrimage did, perhaps because an obligation carried out within a relatively familiar world does not need to be recreated to be understood. Even after Jerusalem had become relatively familiar to Europeans, from

writing are quite unclear. Eisenstein has even suggested, implausibly, that Jacob was sent from Paris to collect money from Jews living in Israel.

²⁹ Michel Butor, "Travel and Writing," *Mosaic* 8,1 (1974) pp.1-16.

³⁰ Michael Harbsmeier, "On Travel Accounts and Cosmological Strategies: Some Models in Comparative Xenology," *Ethnos* 50, 1 (1985) p.283.

³¹ Harbsmeier, p.282.

³² Howard, p.17.

histories of the crusades as well as pilgrimage accounts, travelers kept writing their stories. These later accounts reflect displacement, but also a confidence on the part of the author that people are interested in his individual experiences.

Pilgrims wrote down their experiences for a number of reasons. As mentioned above, there is the natural impulse to share an experience with others, especially if the others are predisposed to enjoy hearing what the traveler has to say. In the case of pilgrimage, any devout person is, by definition, an eager audience for a pilgrimage account.

Johannes Phocas, a cleric of the Eastern Church who was born in Crete, married had a son, and served in the army under Manuel I Comnenus (1143-1180) before becoming a monk and visiting Jerusalem in 1185. He is a thoughtful writer who struggles with the issue of whether writing can ever portray reality, and concludes that his book will be useful if it can facilitate impulses already in the minds of his readers. Two particularly interesting comments by Phocas are especially worth noting - first, that he compares seeing the sights of Jerusalem to the sensory experience of a large meal, and secondly, that he wants his book to "depict the country by words as though by a map."³³ As we have

³³ Joannes Phocas, The Pilgrimage of Joannes Phocas in the Holy Land, trans. Aubrey Stewart, PPTS, vol.5, p.6. I have not been able to see the original.

discussed earlier, a western European at the end of the twelfth century would have been most unlikely to use a map as an example of clarity. A map might be a visual representation of a book, but the expectation that a book will imitate a map is a clear reminder that textuality was not expressed monolithically throughout the Christian world.

Now wherefore should I, who have enjoyed the sight of the holy places...why, I ask, should I alone taste of this blessing, and imitate the manner in which gluttons deal with food?...It is therefore my duty, as far as lies in my power, to attempt to depict the country by words as though by a map, and indirectly by writing to describe to religious students those things which I have beheld directly with my eyes. To those who have seen these places I shall appear to labour in vain; for if the object of my writing is to be to imitate the actual spectacle, then, as all imitation is wont to fall short of the original, it is clear that I shall give them less pleasure than that which has its seat in their eyes. What, then, does my book aim at? Those persons who have never beheld with their eyes these most excellent places, but who frequently meet with mention of them, will, I imagine, be more distinctly taught by my book than by those which speak

of them without defining what they are. It ought also to be more likely to afford some pleasure even to those who have beheld them, if it be pleasant to listen to accounts of what it is enjoyable to behold.³⁴

At the end of this long passage, Phocas explicitly contrasts the experience of reading a book to listening to accounts. His audience is clearly a mixed bag - some have gone on pilgrimage, some not, though the fact that he expects them to "frequently meet with mention" of the holy places suggests that their involvement with the church is more than just casual.

Phocas shows concern about how his work will be received. "If my readers shall think this a useful work, I shall consider myself to be recompensed for my toil and amply rewarded; if not, let this, my child, return to me who begat it, and by its babblings remind me of those holy places, so that I may be sweetly refreshed in imagination by the remembrance of them."³⁵

Of course, the writers do have the readers in mind and try to be practical, like John of Würzburg, a German priest known only through his pilgrimage guide. John toured Jerusalem between 1160 and 1170

³⁴ Phocas, p.6.

³⁵ Phocas, pp.35-36.

and then wrote what he saw so that future visitors would have an easier time touring the city, or at least imagining it. His book, which is dated by internal evidence to 1172, was written to his friend Dietrich, who was possibly the Theoderich who later wrote his own guide to the holy places. Dietrich had wanted John to describe the holy places for him, so John reports that “when I went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem I did not forget you who were absent, having through my affection for you described as clearly and diligently as I was able those venerable places...”³⁶ John wants to evoke mental pictures so that after his book has described places “should you ever by Divine inspiration and protection come hither, they will all present themselves to your eyes naturally, and without any delay or difficulty in finding them, as well known objects; or if perhaps you may not go thither and behold them with your corporeal eyesight, nevertheless by such knowledge and contemplation of them you may obtain a more devout sense of their holiness.”³⁷ The book may either prepare for or replace the actual travel.

Theoderich probably used the book in both ways. Following in John’s footsteps (literally as well as figuratively) Theoderich fully expects that people will use his book to visualize and re-experience his visit. He often uses phrases like “and then you come to”, “on the right side” and

³⁶ John of Würzburg, Description of the Holy Land, trans. Aubrey Stewart, PPTS, vol.5, p.1

³⁷ Würzburg, p.2

describes the behavior of pilgrims. He concludes his book with the expectation that it is for people at home "in the hope that the minds of those who read or hear it may be roused to love Him through their knowledge of the places which are therein described."³⁸

Theoderich has a more expansive view than John. His book does not just describe places to give a sense of them. John recognizes that describing holy places might allow readers to understand their holiness. Theoderich wants to capitalize on that feeling. His book is intended to help the readers and listeners reach a state of love for the divine which can only come from knowing the holy places. In other words, these places have a special capacity to arouse love for God. Normally, the feeling would be awakened only in those who make the pilgrimage, but Theoderich uses his book as a tool. Simply by reading or listening to a description of the holy places, a member of Theoderich's audience can feel the same emotional charge that used to be reserved exclusively for pilgrims.

Pilgrimage to Jerusalem was always expensive and difficult and therefore exclusive. In medieval Europe, people sometimes tried to recreate the journey and its rewards with small physical reminders of

³⁸ Theoderich, p.74. Note that Theoderich expects his book to be read singly and aloud to others.

holiness like relics and replicas.³⁹ The pilgrimage narrative, though not a tactile object, was another way of bringing the pilgrimage to a larger audience of armchair pilgrims. Abbott Daniel expresses this most clearly. Daniel, an abbot of the Greek Orthodox church, left the earliest extant record of a Russian pilgrimage to the Holy Land. This pilgrim may be the same Daniel who was made Bishop of Suriev in 1115 , and who died September 9th 1122. Internal evidence dates his travels to 1106-07. The account, written in Russian, was very popular, and there are at least seventy-five manuscripts, though none is earlier than 1475.⁴⁰

He writes, "I have written this for the faithful, so that, in hearing the description of the holy places, they might be mentally transported to them, from the depths of their souls, and thus obtain from God the same reward as those who have visited them."⁴¹ Daniel has a very clear idea of what a travel account is supposed to accomplish. Text can equal, or even surpass, experience. "May the blessing of God, of the Holy Sepulchre, and of all the holy places be with those who read this

³⁹ For an example of the construction of replicas, see Jonathan Z. Smith, "Constructing a Small Place," in Benjamin Z. Kedar and R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, eds., Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land, New York: New York University Press, 1998.

⁴⁰ Introduction to Abbott Daniel, The Pilgrimage of the Russian Abbott Daniel in the Holy Land, trans. with intro. and annotations, C.W. Wilson, PPTS, vol.4, p.vii.

⁴¹ Daniel, p.2.

narrative with faith and love; and may they obtain from god the same reward as those who have made the pilgrimage to those holy places. Happy are those who, having seen, believe! Thrice happy are those who have not seen, and yet have believed! By faith Abraham obtained the Promised Land; for, in truth, faith is equal to good works."⁴² Daniel actually uses a travel account not to encourage or facilitate pilgrimage, but to subvert it.

Another approach to travel comes out in the writings of Burchard of Mount Zion, a Dominican monk from Germany who traveled in 1232. Whether or not he actually spent time living at Mount Zion is unclear, but there is no doubt that his account was well-known and much copied.⁴³ Burchard does not go quite as far as Daniel. He assumes that his readers and listeners would like to see the Holy Land as he has himself and writes for those Christians who are even more zealous than the Crusaders in feeling a deep connection with the land through the Bible and liturgy. "Seeing, however, that some are possessed by a desire to picture to their minds those things which they are not able to behold with their eyes, and wishing to fulfil their longing, as far as in me lieth, I have, to the best of my ability, thought about, diligently taken note of, and laboriously described that land..."⁴⁴

⁴² Daniel, p.82.

⁴³ Aubrey Stewart's introduction to Burchard, p.v.

⁴⁴ Burchard, p.4

But the description is not done for physical accuracy. The account reads very much like a geographical commentary on the Bible, which is exactly Burchard's purpose. "This description, I think, is of no small use for reading the historical books, and, indeed, the whole Bible, if it be understood, and also for marking each single place, and knowing all about them."⁴⁵

What becomes clear as we read the explanations for writing Christian travel accounts is the overwhelming position of text in the visual experience of pilgrimage. Even people who could not read and were having the pilgrimage accounts read out loud to them had to be aware that reading was replacing reality for them, possibly even making an actual journey unnecessary. Even a keen observer like Burchard, who points out all kinds of interesting sights along the way, writes only to illuminate the Bible.

Burchard makes clear that his trip is not about sightseeing; it is about the Holy Land. He states outright that his trip is exclusively for the study of sacred ground. "Now, albeit I have travelled beyond this place [Tripoli] and viewed the country, yet I write nothing thereof, because I do not intend to write about any land save the Holy Land."⁴⁶ Though the

⁴⁵ Burchard, p.99.

⁴⁶ Burchard, p.21.

journey is wide-ranging, the account of it is narrow and focused. Burchard wrote with a purpose.

How they wrote

One important distinction in travel writing that is whether or not the account was planned in advance. Did the traveler embark on his journey planning to write about it? Some travelers, like Ibn Jubayr and Felix Fabri, kept daily journals that almost surely indicate that they planned to write. More than that, they used figures of speech unlikely to have been for private recollection and they addressed the readers directly. It is no coincidence that their books are among the longest and most readable of the genre.

Ibn Jubayr's travel account was written in journal form. He uses the term *taqyid* a number of times in referring to his work. Each day's entry begins with the date, according to both the Muslim and Christian calendars, and the account ends by summing up the length of the trip. "The span of our journey, from the time of our leaving Granada, to that of our return, was two full years and three months and a half."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Broadhurst, p.366, Nassar, p.444.

Ibn Jubayr took notes and wrote every day. He must have carried paper with him. Often he recorded things as he heard or saw them.⁴⁸ He copies names from tombstones at a Cairo cemetery.⁴⁹ Not only was he taking notes, but he was shaping them into book form during his trip. In upper Egypt he does not retell the indignities of being searched by customs agents "as we related in the description in this book of Alexandria"⁵⁰ When telling the story of Jamal al-Din's burial in Mecca, he anticipates being able to fill in missing information. "We shall mention the date of his death when, if God so wills, we come to the date inscribed on his tomb."⁵¹

Still, Ibn Jubayr did not always have a notebook with him. He writes that at the cemetery of Baghdad are buried many "saints and men of piety and men of noble forbears, whose names I cannot recollect."⁵² Perhaps he took notes during the day and then collected and entered them in his journal at night.

Despite using the experience-based format of a journal, Ibn Jubayr would like to be an omniscient narrator. He sometimes tells the reader of alternative routes which he himself did not take. He also tries

⁴⁸ Broadhurst, p.220, Nassar, p.260.

⁴⁹ Broadhurst, p.39, Nassar, p.42.

⁵⁰ Broadhurst, p.55, Nassar, p.65.

⁵¹ Broadhurst, p.124, Nassar, p.146.

⁵² Broadhurst, p.235, Nassar, p.279.

to give descriptions based not on what he did and saw, but in a logical way that enables the reader to visualize. "We began (the enumeration of these Gates) with the Bab al-Safa because it is the biggest..⁵³ In Mecca, he thinks it worth describing a Qur'an recitation at which he himself does not seem to have been present.

Ibn Jubayr also expects to create a literary work, employing descriptive figures of speech. Sailing to Jiddah, the port of choice for pilgrims to Mecca, the pilgrims "met many reefs which had broken the water and made it laugh"⁵⁴ though the skillful sailors "would enter the narrow channels and manage their way through them as a cavalier manages a horse that is light on the bridle and tractable."⁵⁵ On the return trip home the Mediterranean was calm, and "the water seemed to the eye to be a sheet of molten silver; or we might be wandering between two skies."⁵⁶

One of Ibn Jubayr's most extended metaphors is of Aleppo as a maiden. Many kings "have betrothed her, and to contract her in marriage is not hard. She is desired and it with ease that she is possessed. This is Aleppo... Her name was put in the feminine, and she was decked in the ornaments of a chaste maiden, while (woman-

⁵³ Broadhurst, p.102, Nassar, p.121.

⁵⁴ Broadhurst, p.68, Nassar, p.81.

⁵⁵ Broadhurst, p.69, Nassar, p.82.

⁵⁶ Broadhurst, p.328, Nassar, p.398.

like) upon the treacherous she practised deceit. She was adorned as a bride for the Sword of her State [Sayf al-Dawla] ibn Hamdan. Alas! Alas! Her youth will not endure, suitors she will lack, and after a time ruin will hasten upon her...⁵⁷ Damascus too "displays herself in her bridal dress"⁵⁸ In Palermo, the "King's palaces are disposed around the higher parts, like pearls encircling a woman's full throat."⁵⁹

Similarly, Ibn Jubayr describes the city of Nasibin as "begirt with gardens, thick with trees bearing ripe fruits; and round it there bends, like a bracelet, a river..."⁶⁰ He uses a related, particularly interesting simile for the place of the Tigris in Baghdad, apparently because he has been affected by the place. The river "runs between its eastern and western parts like a mirror shining between two frames, or like a string of pearls between two breasts. The city drinks from it and does not thirst, and looks into a polished mirror that does not tarnish. And the beauty of its women, wrought between its waters and its air, is celebrated and talked of through the lands, so that if God does not give protection, there are the dangers of love's seductions."⁶¹

⁵⁷ Broadhurst, p.261, Nassar, p.314.

⁵⁸ Broadhurst, p.271, Nassar, p.327.

⁵⁹ Broadhurst, p.348, Nassar, p.423.

⁶⁰ Broadhurst, p.248, Nassar, p.297.

⁶¹ Broadhurst, p.226, Nassar, pp.267-68.

Obviously, Ibn Jubayr is writing a book in journal form. Felix Fabri works the same way. Felix's account is also written like a diary, "month by month and day by day"⁶² and he took notes all along. "For I never passed one single day while I was on my travels without writing some notes, not even when I was at sea, in storms, or in the Holy Land; and in the desert I have frequently written as I sat on an ass or a camel; or at night, while the others were asleep, I would sit and put into writing what I had seen."⁶³ He is writing at the request of the other monks, who "flocked round me and eagerly begged me to take careful note of all the holy places I saw, and to write an account of them and bring it to them, so that they also, in mind if not in body, might enjoy the pleasure of visiting the holy places."⁶⁴ He often takes out the time to lecture his readers with long lists.

Fabri's does not claim that his conscientious note-taking makes him completely reliable. He even takes the time to elaborate an unusual defense of his inaccuracies. He recommends the pilgrimage account of his travel companion, Lord Bernard of Braydenbach, Dean of Mainz,⁶⁵ yet downplays any factual discrepancies between the two. In Breydenbach's story, the reader "will find clearly set forth all that I have

⁶² Fabri, vol. 7, p.56.

⁶³ Fabri, vol. 7, p.56,

⁶⁴ Fabri, vol. 7, p.58.

said before; he will find what I have expressed in many words put into few, and will find a duplicate of my book of pilgrimage and wandering, with the exception that sometimes I have been forced by the plan of my work purposely to alter the days, saying 'This was done on such a day,' whereas he says that it was done on another day; wherein there is no violence or discrepancy, seeing that when we read the Scriptures we find the same thing to have been done by the Evangelists."⁶⁶ Perhaps he and Breydenbach compared notes along the way and Fabri realized that his inaccuracies would be noticed. Breydenbach's account was written down in Latin in 1485 (about a year after the trip) by a Dominican priest named Martin Roth, who was not among the more than 50 people on pilgrimage with Fabri. Breydenbach's account is less famous for its words than for the detailed woodcuts which accompany the text.⁶⁷

Many travelers took notes along the way and then when they returned home, they combined these notes with their own recollections to create a coherent account of the journey. Meshullam of Volterra (1481) wrote his book along the way but edited, lightly and incompletely, after returning to Italy. For example, one entry is dated "To-day,

⁶⁵ Fabri reports, vol.7, p.206, that Breydenbach copied Burchard's account. Fabri seems to have done the same.

⁶⁶ Fabri, vol. 8, p.629.

⁶⁷ Hugh William Davis, Bernhard von Breydenbach and his journey to the Holy Land 1483-4: A bibliography, Utrecht: Haentjens Dekker & Gumbert, repr.1968, introduction.

Tuesday, the 12th June, we left Alexandria" but is followed by the recollection that "Wednesday, the 13th June, we reached Rosetta."⁶⁸ Another similar journal entry occurs as he leaves Jerusalem for Beirut. When he digresses, he is aware of leaving the main flow of the text, and rejoins with phrases like, "To return to our former subject."⁶⁹ Sometimes he refers to his own writing, explaining "I have already written about this above."⁷⁰ At one point, he seems to be planning ahead, telling the reader that he will resume the subject of his relationship with the local Jewish populations when he reaches Jerusalem. But soon after he writes as though unsure of the outcome of his trip. "We left Misr on the 4th July, 1481, may it be the Almighty's will that I may reach Jerusalem and fulfil my vows, and that he may let me go back to my house in life and joy and peace."⁷¹ The book is arranged chronologically, not just geographically.

Isaac Chelo (1334) arranged his ideas geographically before writing them down. He mentions the four contemporary gates of Jerusalem and then one by one explains what is outside each. Jerusalem is the center, and the rest of the country radiates from it. The letter begins with a description of Jerusalem, then counts seven

⁶⁸ Adler, p.163, Eisenstein, p.90.

⁶⁹ Adler, p.169, Eisenstein, p.93.

⁷⁰ Adler, p.195, Eisenstein, p.101.

⁷¹ Adler, p.124, Eisenstein, p.94.

roads that "start in the Holy City and go through all the land of Israel."⁷² He goes along each route then returns the reader to Jerusalem, but there is no evidence that he was based in Jerusalem and took short one or two day trips. He writes consciously and uses phrases like "as mentioned above".

Benjamin of Tudela, the most famous of all Jewish travelers, did some light editing at the end of his trip, but apparently wrote his book during his travels. According to the anonymous Hebrew introduction, "In every place which he entered, he made a record of all that he saw, or was told of by trustworthy persons - matters not previously heard of in the land of Sepharad...He brought this book with him on his return to the country of Castile, in the year 4933 [C.E. 1173]"⁷³ The book, written on paper, shows very few examples of having been read over and edited. One possible exception is a description of the Jews of Thebes. Though Benjamin goes to Thebes before Constantinople, he says that the leaders of the Jewish community are prominent men "and there are none like them in the land of the Greeks, except in the city of Constantinople."⁷⁴ He may have heard of these Jews in advance, though. Also, he says that Constantinople "is a busy city, and merchants come to it from every country by sea or land, and there is

⁷² Adler, p.134, Eisenstein, p.73.

⁷³ Signer, p.55, Eisenstein, p.18.

⁷⁴ Signer, p.68, Eisenstein, p.21.

none like it in the world except Baghdad, the great city of Islam.”⁷⁵ He was at that point very far from seeing Baghdad, so either he knew about Baghdad, which seems unlikely, or he must have revised his book. The revisions may have been made on the way home, or in France, where the book ends.

Jacob ha Cohen, in the twelfth century, does not himself tell when or how he wrote his book, but according to the editor, Jacob had written the book when he “entered the Land of Israel.”⁷⁶ However, the order of the book suggests that someone arranged it later.

This last detail highlights an important fact about medieval travel writing. Very often, the traveler did not see the final version of his own account. Frequently, the editing was done by someone other than the writer, a situation that creates real problems for readers trying to determine the interests and capabilities of the traveler.

Ibn Battuta was probably the victim of one of the most conspicuous and intrusive editing jobs in all of travel literature. His editor, Ibn Juzayy (1321-56 or 58), had no qualms about putting in his own observations. Ibn Juzayy, himself a noted scholar, took dictation from Ibn Battuta and then reorganized it into a book. The resulting work

⁷⁵ Signer, p.70, Eisenstein, p.22.

⁷⁶ Eisenstein, p.58, my translation. Adler p.92 translates “the Land of Israel” as “the Holy Land..”

is enjoyable to read but its chronology is so hopelessly convoluted that it is nearly impossible to untangle the threads of the narrative to reconstruct Ibn Battuta's actual journey.⁷⁷

Ibn Juzayy goes out of his way to put himself in the role of transmitter, one whose editorial work is only to clarify what he has heard. "I have rendered the sense of the narrative of the Shaikh Abu 'Abdallah in language which adequately expresses the purposes that he had in mind and sets forth clearly the ends which he had in view. Frequently I have reported his words in his own phrasing, without omitting either root or branch. I have related all the anecdotes and historical narratives which he related, without applying myself to investigate their truthfulness or to test them, since he himself has adopted the soundest methods of authenticating those of them that are wholly acceptable, and has disclaimed responsibility for the rest of them by expressions which give warnings to that effect."⁷⁸

Ibn Juzayy obviously believes that a work like this ought to be checked, though absent the tools to do so, he relies entirely on Ibn

⁷⁷ Not that it hasn't been tried. See Ivan Hrbek, "The Chronology of Ibn Battuta's Travels," *Archiv Orientalni* 30 (1962) pp.409-486 and Ross E. Dunn, The Adventures of Ibn Battuta, A Muslim Traveler of the 14th Century, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986, paperback 1989, pp.1-4 and p.314.

⁷⁸ Gibb, vol.1, p.6, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.11.

Battuta.⁷⁹ Sometimes he does have comment, so that when Ibn Battuta says that Uwais died along a journey, Ibn Juzayy interjects that the man died at the Battle of Siffin "and this is the truer story, if God will."⁸⁰

Ibn Juzayy pretends to let the story be Ibn Battuta's - that is, he puts the narrative in the first person, hiding the editor's role as much as possible. However Ibn Juzayy gets involved right from the start, putting in a footnote about Ibn Battuta's birthday.

Ibn Battuta, like Ibn Jubayr, begins with the date but he is not obsessive about dating events. He is perfectly content to date an event by putting it within the reign of a given caliph. Though trying to keep to the chronological order of his trip, Ibn Battuta "cross-references" himself. About the port of Alexandria he writes, "among all the ports in the world I have seen none to equal it, except the ports of Kawlām and Qalīqūt in India, the port of the infidels [Genoese] at Sudaq in the land of the Turks, and the port of Zaitun in China, all of which will be mentioned later."⁸¹ This approach allows him to say that he visited the lighthouse twenty-three years after the first visit "and found that it had fallen into so

⁷⁹ Compare this with the introduction to Benjamin of Tudela, where the anonymous medieval editor notes that "they checked everything to examine him closely, and they found his words correct, for he is a man of truth." Eisenstein, p.18, my translation.

⁸⁰ Gibb, vol.1, p.140, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.223.

⁸¹ Gibb, vol.1, p.19, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.28.

ruinous a condition that it was impossible to enter it or to climb up to the doorway."⁸²

Ibn Battuta apparently did not write down everything along the way. Though he manages to give many names, he does forget some, like his host at Luxor. "I was the guest of the *qadi* there, but I have forgotten his name."⁸³ Similarly at Hisn al-Akrad, "I stayed with the *qadi* of the place, but I cannot now recall his name exactly."⁸⁴ Once he mentions losing some of his notes in a shipwreck, so he must have tried for a while to record his experiences. Given the length of his voyages, Ibn Battuta's lapses are surprisingly few, though of course most of his information was unverifiable and some of it was copied directly from Ibn Jubayr.⁸⁵

⁸² Gibb, vol.1, p.19, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.29.

⁸³ Gibb, vol.1, p.67, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.108.

⁸⁴ Gibb, vol.1, p.90, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.140.

⁸⁵ See J.N. Mattock, "The Travel Writings of Ibn Jubair and Ibn Battuta," *Glasgow Oriental society Transactions* XXI (1965-66) pp.35-56, and also his, "Ibn Battuta's use of Ibn Jubayr's *Rihla*," in Rudolph Peters, ed., Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of the Union Europeene des Arabisants et Islamisants (Amsterdam 1-7 September 1978) Leiden: EJ Brill, 1981. (Publications of the Netherlands Institute of Archaeology and Arabic Studies in Cairo 4) Amikam Elad, "The Description of the Travels of Ibn Battuta in Palestine: Is it Original?" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2 (1987) pp.256-72, argues convincingly that large parts of Ibn Battuta's description of Palestine come not from Ibn Jubayr but from the writings of another Valencian, Muhammad b. Muhammad al-'Abdari, who traveled the area in December of 1289 and

Though Ibn Battuta's case is extreme, it is hardly unique. Among Jewish travel writers as well, one sometimes finds editing that obscures, rather than clarifies, the author's intentions. For example, Jacob b. Nathaniel ha Cohen's twelfth-century account is hampered by poor editing. "The copyist took considerable liberties with the text, and sometimes one even has the impression that pages were copied in the wrong order."⁸⁶ Basically, "the text is so mutilated that there is no chance of rational reconstruction."⁸⁷

Petahia of Ratisbon was so heavily edited that his broad range of interests is narrowed down to a book that is mostly about holy graves. At one point the narrator mentions that Petahia "named all the cities; and stated how many days it took him to travel from city to city. However, there is no occasion to write it down."⁸⁸ It seems that Petahia may have dictated a more present-oriented travelogue but that it was narrated/edited by someone who preferred stories about the graves of famous men. The editor was also trying to get information about Biblical sites. That was his journalistic angle, so to speak.

January of 1290, and then wrote a very literary *Rihla* of his own. Mohammed ben Cheneb, "al-'Abdari" in EI. Fabri has shown that copying was hardly unknown in European travel accounts, and we shall discuss below the possibility that many later Christian authors worked from a single source.

⁸⁶ Prawer, p.185.

⁸⁷ Prawer, p.191.

⁸⁸ Adler, p.85, Eisenstein, p.54 has "there is no need to write."

Joshua Prawer suggests that Petahia's not seeing the pillar of salt or the stones piled up by Joshua in Gilgal is "perhaps part of the original treatise of a rather critical pilgrim, which somehow escaped the scissors of the 'editors'."⁸⁹ It might, however, be a response to them. That is, the editor, or the scribe referred to in the text as Judah, asked Petahia if he had any information about these specific sites and Petahia responded. The dialogue itself eludes the readers; only the conclusions remain.

A puzzling story in Petahia's account feeds speculation about the relationship between Petahia and his narrator/editor and readers.

At Ninveh there was an astrologer whose name was R. Solomon. There is among all sages in Ninveh, and the land of Assur, none as expert in the planets as he. R. Petahia asked him when Messiah would come. He replied, I have seen this often distinctly in the planets. But Rabbi Judah the pious would not write it down lest he should be suspected of being a believer in the words of Rabbi Solomon.⁹⁰

The story of course testifies to the different layers of communication - Petahia directly or indirectly to Rabbi Judah and from him to someone

⁸⁹ Prawer, p.212.

else. Was Petahia genuinely a mystic or just making conversation with the astrologer?⁹¹ Was this the point of the trip? Why did Rabbi Judah and the next redactor feel on that this episode was worth reporting in general but not in detail? What would happen to Rabbi Judah if word got out that he believed in this person? So much is missing that reconstruction is nearly impossible. In any case, the story highlights the many layers of the writing process.

Not all of the confusion can be blamed on the copyist. Petahia himself lost a list of graves, as mentioned earlier. It is even possible that he simply did not consider the list worth keeping.

Certainly copyists influenced the tone of the writing, sometimes inserting themselves without notice. Jacob ha Cohen ends, after first person eyewitness accounts, with a puzzling phrase. "As I have been privileged to write about the Holy Land, so may I be privileged to go there and die there."⁹² Presumably this is the copyist's expression.

The account of Samuel ben Samson in 1210, like that of Petahia, was edited by a third person, not the traveler himself. Samuel

⁹⁰ Adler, pp.68-69, Eisenstein, pp.48-49.

⁹¹ It is possible but not definite that the R. Judah the Pious mentioned here is the Rabbi Judah of Regensburg (c.1150-1217), a leader of the a German ideological circle that did in fact indulge in messianic speculation. This Rabbi Judah was famously reticent about signing his writings. See Joseph Dan, "Judah he-Hasid, Juda of Regensburg" EJ.

went on his journey with Jonathan of Lunel, a patron of Jewish learning known for commissioning Ibn Tibbon's translation of Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed*. The editor needs to authenticate his version, so he writes things like "this appears from what I shall relate from the mouth of a man, who was in the Holy Land with Rabbi R. Jonathan ha Cohen, of Lunel. His name is R. Samuel ben Samson, who travelled with him in the land of Goshen, and crossed the desert with him and with him entered Jerusalem. This was in the year 4970 (=1210)."⁹³ Despite this, the account is in the first person and is signed at the end by Samuel Bar Samson.

Christian travelers were most likely to have written down their travels themselves, possibly because so many of them were monks that they might have had the opportunity and encouragement to write. The most famous instance of a dictated account is before the period we are studying - the story of the French monk Arculf, as told to his Irish colleague Adamnan in the eighth century. Adamnan wrote as he listened, and once even asked Arculf to draw a picture of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher on a wax tablet to help explain the narrative. Also in the eighth century, a young English nun in Germany took dictation from

⁹² Adler, p.99, Eisenstein, p. 62.

⁹³ Adler, p.103, Eisenstein, p.62.

Willibald, an Englishman then serving as Bishop of Eichstadt. Apparently she acted out of her own initiative.⁹⁴

Some evidence suggests that later Christian travelers may have dictated their works and not written them themselves. Assuming that Ernoul's account was written after he returned home but was not subjected to heavy revision would explain a sentence like "I have forgot to tell you when I spoke thereof how far it from Jerusalem to that mountain ..."⁹⁵ Phrases such as "of which I spoke before"⁹⁶ might also suggest that Ernoul dictated his work.

One important factor in these works is the amount of time that elapses between the travel and the writing. Obviously, diarists intended the two to appear simultaneous, but most travel accounts were not diaries. Ludolph von Suchem, a German priest writing in the middle of the fourteenth century, states explicitly that he did not write about his travels immediately. He had not intended to write a book at all, but after a few years back in Germany, he apparently decided that a written record would be of value. He tells his readers (the book is dedicated to the bishop of an unidentified city of Paderborn, but is clearly intended for

⁹⁴ Arculf, Arculf's Narrative about the Holy Places, Written by Adamnan, trans. and annotated James Rose MacPherson PPTS, vol.3 p.8; Willibald, The Hodoeporicon of Saint Willibald, trans. W.R. Brownlow, PPTS, vol. 3, p.2.

⁹⁵ Ernoul, Ernoul's Account of Palestine, trans. C.R. Conder, PPTS, vol.6, p.54.

⁹⁶ Ernoul, p.57.

a wider audience) that he did not write the book immediately, "being hindered by divers and sundry labors"⁹⁷. This delay has shaped the book's form. "Indeed, I should have put in much more if, when in those parts, I had formed the intention of writing some account of them a little earlier..⁹⁸ and there are some things which he has decided not to include "because of ignorant cavillers and scoffers, lest I should tell anything which they could not believe, and for which I should be held by them for a liar"⁹⁹ Ludolph's original observations are softened by the passage of time and by thoughtful editing. Also, because he did not travel with the intention of writing, he did not take the kinds of careful notes that he might have.

The length of the delay has to be guessed from internal evidence. Ludolph writes that "In the year of our Lord one thousand three hundred and forty-one, on St. George's Eve [April 22], there was a persecution and murder of Christians by the King and a mob of Damascus, even as of late there was of the Jews in this county; but the persecution did not last for more than a month and was well avenged through the Soldan, as you will hear hereafter."¹⁰⁰ Since his trip

⁹⁷ Ludolph, p.2.

⁹⁸ Ludolph, p.2.

⁹⁹ Ludolph, p.2.

¹⁰⁰ Ludolph, p.130. In Germany, the violence coincided with outbreaks of the bubonic plague. Jews were murdered in 350 towns; in 210 of these towns, every single Jew was killed. In Strasbourg, 2,000 Jews were burned in

probably took place from 1336-1341, and he is referring to violence in Germany in 1348-49, it makes sense to assume that Ludolph did his writing after he had been back in Germany for at least eight years.¹⁰¹

How they gathered information

Every travel account, whether written during the journey or composed and edited after a long delay, is the record of what new things the traveler has encountered. The encounter does not necessarily have to be visual. That is, the traveler does not only report on things he has seen, but also things he has learned by hearing or reading. The whole concept of the *rihla* is predicated upon the idea that ideas travel best when borne by travelers. So it should not be surprising that travelers return home with second-hand information as an essential part of their baggage. One other source of information is inscriptions and plaques. A number of travelers copy these uncritically.

February of 1349, and local inhabitants sifted through the ashes looking for valuables. Ruth Gay, The Jews of Germany: a historical portrait, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992, p.28.

¹⁰¹ Stewart's preface to Ludolph, p.iii.

Ibn Jubayr is willing to write things he has not seen himself. From his description, it seems clear that he did not visit the pyramids.¹⁰² Though prevented by the crusades from visiting Jerusalem, he does tell "what is reported of the Dome [of the Rock] in Jerusalem."¹⁰³ And he uses his common sense to arrive at conclusions, even when he is dealing with second-hand information. "The lake of Tiberias is sweet. Its breadth is four or five parasangs, and although statements about its length vary, the nearest to the truth is that it is about six parasangs, albeit we did not see it. There is a dispute as well about the width."¹⁰⁴ Sometimes Ibn Jubayr quotes books to supplement or even replace his own observations. Ibn Jubayr's information on pigeons in Mecca comes from the *Notes on Mecca*.¹⁰⁵ Though he has seen the pigeons himself, he apparently did not see them behaving in the miraculous way described in the book - not roosting in the Ka'ba. Ibn Jubayr's description of the mosque at Damascus is apparently a mixture of his own observations together with information from a certain Ibn al-Mu'alli

¹⁰² See Broadhurst, p.46.

¹⁰³ Broadhurst, p.308, Nassar, p.372.

¹⁰⁴ Broadhurst, p.324, Nassar, p.393. Broadhurst, p.395 estimates the parasang, an ancient Persian linear measure, to be approximately three and a quarter miles, though others put it closer to four miles, or six kilometers. In any case, Ibn Jubayr wildly overestimates the size of the Kinneret.

¹⁰⁵ In Mecca there were also personal guides, but our writers are not too concerned with them. Peters, Jerusalem and Mecca, pp.230-231.

al-'Asadi, "in a chapter that he wrote in a description of its building."¹⁰⁶

He has also read a book of *Fada'il Dimshaq*, the Merits of Damascus.

He quotes "the *hafiz* and Syrian traditionalist, Abu 'l-Qasim ibn Hibat Allah ibn 'Asakir the Damascene in his history, *The Story of Damascus*, which consists of more than a hundred volumes."¹⁰⁷

Faced with contradictory or difficult information, Ibn Jubayr tries to reconcile it with writing. A wall along part of the banks of the Nile is the subject of all sorts of stories "but to be short, it is a wonderful thing and its secret is known only to Great and Glorious God."¹⁰⁸

Most travelers are not nearly as forthcoming as Ibn Jubayr about their sources. Theoderich, traveling in about 1172, is honest in that he does not pretend to see things that he has not seen. "Now, according to the best of our ability, we have told what we learned with our own eyes about Christ and His holy places. We shall now tell what is known about His friends and about other places. After this we shall tell of some things which were seen by ourselves, and some which were related to us by

¹⁰⁶ Broadhurst, p.272, Nassar, p.328. Ibn Jubayr also expects his readers to be familiar with what is written in history books. This same author is mentioned by Ibn Jubayr again on p.273 and p.286, Nassar, pp.329 and 345.

¹⁰⁷ Broadhurst, p.285, Nassar, p.344. Ibn 'Asakir (1105-1176) wrote an eighty-volume history of notable people connected with Damascus. Only a few volumes survive.

¹⁰⁸ Broadhurst, p.51, Nassar, p.58 and Nassar n.3 there.

others.”¹⁰⁹ He repeats at the end of his book that “we have put together partly from what we have ourselves seen, and partly from what we have heard from the truthful reports of other men.”¹¹⁰

Sometimes travelers rely on second hand information because they do not have the opportunity to see places that they know their audience wants to hear about. For example, Ludolph (in about 1350) was discouraged by some Templars from going to the Dead Sea, but writes about it anyhow, admitting that “I know nothing save what has been told me.”¹¹¹ Still, he takes a stab at giving the geography a moral dimension.

Not far - only two short miles away - from the place where Jesus was baptized, the Jordan enters the Dead or Accursed Sea, and is seen no more, and it is a question in the East why such blessed water should enter so accursed a place. Some say it is that the curse of one may be allayed by the blessing of the other, others declare that it is swallowed up just at

¹⁰⁹ Theoderich, p.42.

¹¹⁰ Theoderich, p.74

¹¹¹ Ludolph, p.116. Ludolph was not the only European traveler to be discouraged from going to the Dead Sea because of the sulfuric smell. Felix Fabri, vol.9, pp.150-153, gives a whole list of reasons that pilgrims should not go to the Dead Sea. Still, he joins the part of his group that chooses to go

the entrance; both of which may well be believed; but to me it seems more likely that it is drunk up by the earth, for sometimes the rain-water running from all the hills round about makes the Jordan so great that it would not be possible for such a body of water to run into the sea without making it overflow, and flood all the county about it.¹¹²

Ludolph does not preach but he does get very specific when writing about a volcano that erupted before he went Sicily. Obviously, he did not see the volcano, but still he writes in detail about how rivers of fire “come out of the mountain like red-hot glowing brass, and (the fire) consumes everything which it finds on its way, whether it be wood or stones, even as hot water consumes snow, and lays waste the land in some places for a distance of two miles, according as the land is high or low, making it a desert and forever uninhabitable...”¹¹³

John Poloner, a German traveling in 1421-22, gives detailed information which he heard about a city he did not visit. Without having visited Tripoli, he reports that “I have heard for a truth that that there are therein twelve hundred weavers of silk and camlet...many religious

there and testifies that it is “a barren place of salt and stench even to this day.” Fabri vol.9, p.167.

¹¹² Ludolph, p.120.

¹¹³ Ludolph, p.26.

houses are built, and many Greek and Armenian churches."¹¹⁴ He may not have even circled Jerusalem, for he writes that the north and south parts of the city walls are "well known to have no gates."¹¹⁵

Sometimes it is the vagueness of the information which points to its second-hand nature. When a writer has very concrete information about some places and very inexact information about others, it is likely that he did not see all the things he describes. That is the assumption we made about Ibn Jubayr at the pyramids, but it is particularly important in examining the writing of Benjamin of Tudela at the end of the twelfth century. The English introduction to his book by A. Asher in 1840 already grapples with the problem of Benjamin's sources. "One very peculiar feature of this work, by which its contents are divided into 'what he saw' and 'what he heard,' as the preface has it, requires particular notice."¹¹⁶ Asher notes that until Baghdad, Benjamin mentions towns with their leaders; afterwards, there are only four individual Jews. "So very remarkable a difference between this and the preceding part of the work, leads us to assert, that R. Benjamin's travels did not extend beyond Baghdad, and that he there wrote down the second portion of our work, consisting of 'what he heard.' "¹¹⁷ One

¹¹⁴ Poloner, p.33.

¹¹⁵ Poloner, p.3.

¹¹⁶ Signer, pp.49-50.

¹¹⁷ Signer, p.50.

notices immediately that after Baghdad, the Jewish communities are reported to be improbably large. (For example, 15,000 Jews in Isfahan and 50,000 in Samarkand) Even before Baghdad, Benjamin reports on things which he most likely did not see - a church in Rome and the Mosque of Damascus, for example. Of course, Benjamin never claims to have seen everything he mentions, and the introduction to the book specifically states that he relied on "all that he saw, or was told of by trustworthy persons"¹¹⁸

Petahia of Ratisbon, also traveling at the end of the twelfth century, was like Benjamin in reporting on things of which he clearly had no immediate knowledge. He was under travel restrictions that prevented him from touring freely. "But in Persia the Jews are subject to hard bondage and sufferings. Therefore Rabbi Petahia visited only one city in Persia."¹¹⁹ Because travelers often paid taxes at every city they visited, a traveler's budget constraints could have a serious impact on what he saw. Petahia travels to New Ninveh along the Tigris.¹²⁰ Old Ninveh, opposite, "is black as pitch...overthrown like Sodom. There is there neither herb nor any vegetation."¹²¹ Petahia must have been curious enough to gather information, but it does not seem certain that

¹¹⁸ Signer, p.55, emphasis mine, Eisenstein p.18.

¹¹⁹ Adler, p.71, Eisenstein, p.50.

¹²⁰ Adler p.67 n.10 says that this is Mosul, called Assur by Benjamin of Tudela.

¹²¹ Adler, p.67, Eisenstein, p.48.

he actually went there. He also describes the caliphal court without having been there himself, apparently basing himself on descriptions by the Jews of Baghdad.

Burchard of Mount Zion is unlike most travelers in admitting his discomfort with second-hand sources. He recognizes that it is not always possible to visit every place that he wants to see, but lets the reader know that he recognizes his limitations. "I would have the reader to know that I have set down in this my description nought save what I have either seen with mine own eyes, when at the place itself, or, when I could not come at it, what I have seen from some neighbouring maintain-top or other convenient place, and have carefully noted the answers given by the Syrian or Saracen, or other people of the land, whom I most diligently questioned."¹²²

Felix Fabri reminds his readers that second-hand information is not always to be trusted. While he was still in Germany, "two vagabonds from Flanders" came telling tales about the wealth and Christianization of the east. Fabri says the stories were so outrageous "that I stuck at nothing which they told me"¹²³ even after one of the information-bearers showed him a scar to prove part of his story.

¹²² Burchard, p.4.

¹²³ Fabri vol.7, p.316

Ludolph von Suchem is defensive about the truth of his account. He considers hearing information from good sources to be as reliable as seeing things. "And I know that in no respect can my account be impugned by any man living, for I bear testimony of what I have seen or have heard from truthful men."¹²⁴ Perhaps he feels he has to be defensive because his observations were "not along the common pilgrim-routes"¹²⁵ and so he mentions a great deal of new and unusual information.

The main source of travelers' second-hand information is in the writings of other travelers. As we shall see later, travelers commonly borrowed, copied and based themselves on the works of their predecessors.

The overwhelming part of travelers' information is unattributed. Writers simply tell what is at a certain place and sometimes offer background history. They give very little indication of how they gathered their information, but the few times they do discuss their methods indicate that religious travelers used a wide variety of sources. Some of the information comes from guides, whether formal or informal. Felix Fabri's group, traveling at the end of the fifteenth century when Christian Holy Land pilgrimage was highly professionalized, employs guides and

¹²⁴ Ludolph, p.136.

¹²⁵ Ludolph, p.136.

depends very much on the local "tourist industry." The industry must have been quite well-established - Fabri even gets the same mule driver on his second trip as he had on his first.¹²⁶

The Russian abbot Daniel the only other traveler who explicitly mentions that he chose a guide. Daniel recognizes that he is an outsider and that "it is impossible to visit and explore all the sacred places without a good guide and an interpreter" so he found "a very pious man of advanced age"¹²⁷ as his guide. It seems that reliability comes from two channels - religious standing, implying honesty, and age, meaning access to empirical evidence and a larger body of hearsay closer to actual events. Ludolph von Suchem, in about 1350, traveled with someone who had been to the Holy Land before.

Some guides seems to have been freelancers, that is, people with religious jobs who also gave information about the shrines for which they were responsible. Ibn Jubayr particularly likes to rely on this type of source. "I was told by one of the Maghribis who supervised this, one Abu 'l-Hasan 'ali ibn Sardal al-Jayyani, known as al-Aswad, that if properly controlled these endowments yield five hundred dinars a year."¹²⁸ Especially in Mecca, Ibn Jubayr relies on pious Muslims for information. Ibn Jubayr heard from the caretaker of the Abbasid Dome

¹²⁶ Fabri, vol.7, p241.

¹²⁷ Daniel, p.3.

that people come there in times of trouble to take out a Qur'an written in the hand of the first Qur'an redactor, Zayd ibn Thabit and put it at the threshold to pray. Ibn Jubayr himself kisses the book. He also relies on observations of "Some truth-demanding sheiks of the *mujawir* (settled pilgrims)"¹²⁹

A jurisprudent from the Yemen named Ibn Abi 'l-Sayf told him that the tribe of Saru might get their name from a mountain in Yemen called Sarat. Some places in Kufa were said to be houses of Ali and of Noah's family. "These venerable traditions we received from the tongue of a sheikh of the country, and we recorded them as he told them."¹³⁰ Ibn Jubayr makes no pretense of having checked the information, relying instead on the elder who told it to him. This does not mean that he is sure his sources are always right. There may be a certain sarcasm in the way his observations about some holy sites in Mecca is followed by "So were we told by one of our reliable sheiks."¹³¹

Saewulf, an Englishman (whether priest or layman is unclear) who traveled in 1102-03, often quotes the local Christian population and defends their reliability as sources. They help him to sort through some conflicting information about the size and shape of Jerusalem. Like

¹²⁸ Broadhurst, p.298, Nassar, p.360.

¹²⁹ Broadhurst, p.179, Nassar, p.204.

¹³⁰ Broadhurst, p.220, Nassar, p. 270.

¹³¹ Broadhurst, p.112, Nassar, p.133.

many medieval Christian pilgrims from Europe, Saewulf found that the city did not look the way he expected it to and looked for some explanation. "We know that our Lord suffered without the gate. But the Emperor Adrian...rebuilt the city Jerusalem and the Temple of the Lord, and extended the city as far as the tower of David, which formerly had been some distance from the city; as anyone can see from the Mount of Olives, where the extreme west walls of city formerly were, and how much the city was afterwards extended...some, however, say that the city was restored by the Emperor Justinian, and the Temple of the Lord, just as it is now, but they say this according to their own private opinion, and not according to the truth. For the Assyrians, whose fathers were the settlers in that country from the first persecution, say that after our Lord's Passion the city was seven times captured and destroyed, together with all the churches, but not wholly levelled to the ground."¹³² Saewulf looks for geography to conform with Biblical expectation, then tries to find the most authentic explanation. He assumes that the father-son link is a fair chain of transmission, and is particularly reliable because it is accompanied by local memory.

Fetellus, in 1130, is not straightforward about his sources, but apparently he had guides or local residents who explained the meanings of Arabic words. In discussing that Hebron is known as *Qiryat Arba*

¹³² Saewulf, p.10.

(*Kariath Arbe*) he notes that "*Arbe* ...in the Saracen language means four, to which is prefixed *Kariath*, which means city."¹³³ About three hundred years later, John Poloner also looked to locals for help in understanding Arabic. At the Mount of Olives, he notices that "In this same chapel the Saracens offer devout prayers, and have a stone in the same. Moreover, they have written over the door of the same chapel in red letters of their alphabet, 'I am the door of Mercy.'"¹³⁴ Someone must have read and/or translated for him. The same must have happened at the spot where Jesus taught his disciples to pray. "Notice the stone inscribed with Hebrew letters, which the Saracens have placed on the threshold of this door."¹³⁵ Poloner refers to Hebrew by name, but does not do the same for Arabic. Perhaps he does not name alphabets whose letters he does not identify. Franciscans and Dominicans in the fifteenth century were active students of Hebrew, so a German or Polish monk like Poloner (his origin and affiliation are unclear) might very well have been able to identify Hebrew writing on his own.¹³⁶

¹³³ Fetellus, p.9

¹³⁴ Poloner, p.9.

¹³⁵ Poloner, p.10.

¹³⁶ The study of the language had something of a revival at the end of the fifteenth century, though mainly in England and France. Not surprisingly, a knowledge of Hebrew had long been considered important for Biblical studies. Beryl Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages, University of Notre Dame Press, 1964, pp.338-364.

John of Würzburg, a German priest touring Jerusalem between 1160 and 1170, does not get any help in deciphering Arabic, and is content to mention "a lintel whereof many Saracen letters are inscribed."¹³⁷

Travelers did not always assume that guides were reliable. Like Ibn Jubayr, John of Würzburg does not necessarily accept information from people just because they happen to be near holy sites. John gives some details about Calvary with a caveat. "Others, however, have other opinions about this place, as I have heard on the spot."¹³⁸

Even when John does accept the word of local inhabitants, he does not rely on them exclusively. John of Würzburg accepts Jacobite monks as a source of information about the life and relics of Mary Magdalene, but admits that they are among competing sources. The Jacobites "admit that the body of Mary Magdalene rests in our own country, being buried at Verziliacum. This they declare, as I have heard with my own ears; but, as has been said above, our learned doctors say that the Mary who anointed the feet and the head of Jesus, and the sister of Lazarus, were one and the same, and she was once a sinner. However, the text of the Gospels is very hard to understand on this point, and causes even the most careful reader to be uncertain...If

¹³⁷ Würzburg, p.16.

¹³⁸ Würzburg, p.31.

anyone wishes to receive more certain knowledge about this matter, let him come himself and inquire about the order and truth of this act from the more learned inhabitants of this country, for I have learned this in the Scriptures and not entirely from these men."¹³⁹ In this situation, John admits that "the more learned inhabitants of this country" (the Holy Land, not Germany) are a better source of information than his own understanding of Scripture, but then he relies on his own judgment anyway. He leaves the research to future travelers.

Johannes Phocas enjoys speaking with local religious figures. He tells a variation of a well-known story about people dying in dramatic fashion after daring to desecrate the remains of a holy person. His story of the people who were burnt after trying to open the tomb of St. George is presented as recent and first-hand. "It is worth while to tell what I heard from the priests of the church as to what took place a few years ago at the tomb of the saint."¹⁴⁰ It was probably from other Priests that Phocas learnt about the beliefs of the Samaritans. Mount Gerizim "according to the Samaritans, is that whereon God talked with Abraham and demanded Isaac in sacrifice, and hereon, according to their

¹³⁹ Würzburg p.24 is trying to reconcile narratives from John 11:2 and Luke 12:36-50.

¹⁴⁰ Phocas, p.34.

tradition, the patriarch consummated the sacrifice, albeit they know not what they say; for that holy mountain is the rocky Golgotha..."¹⁴¹

Not all conversations are informational. Since the traveler is on a spiritually charged trip, it should be no surprise that he stops for spiritual instruction. Ibn Jubayr spent most of his time in Mecca attending lectures. Ibn Battuta tried to study along the way and picked up some degrees as he traveled. Similarly, Phocas is interested in meeting with people who are his spiritual superiors. At a tower for recluses in the Judean desert lived "a tall old Spaniard, a very pleasing and admirable person, from whose conversation we derived much benefit; for indeed a species of divine grace adorns this old man."¹⁴² The only information related on his authority is a miraculous story about animals following his orders. Later on, Phocas stops to speak with another Spanish recluse, with whom he had once served in the army.¹⁴³

Like Phocas, Burchard speaks to Christians who are not members of his own church and asks them about their loyalties. Around Lebanon "dwell many races, as aforesaid, such as Maronites, Armenians, Greeks, Nestorians, Jacobites, and Georgians, all of whom are Christians, and are, by their own account, subjects of the Church of

¹⁴¹ Phocas, p.16.

¹⁴² Phocas, p.27

¹⁴³ Phocas, p.29.

Rome.”¹⁴⁴ While visiting Armenia, Burchard asked the monks there whose works they followed, and reports that they rely on three fourth-century Church Fathers - Cyril of Alexandria, as well as John Chrysostom and Gregory Nazianzen, both of Constantinople. He needs to have some common literary background.

Benjamin of Tudela tends to be skeptical but he allows that caretakers and local inhabitants know more about holy places than he does. The Jews of Rome told him that every year on the ninth of Av, two bronze pillars taken from the Temple in Jerusalem and now in the Church of St. John's, exude moisture like tears. Benjamin trusts them for the miraculous part of the story, but he needs physical proof that the pillars are authentic. According to him, each column is engraved “Solomon the Son of David”, presumably in Hebrew. Meshullam of Volterra reports that on the ninth of Av, the lamps in the Al-Aqsa mosque go out and cannot be lit. This commemoration of the temple's destruction is “clear and known to everyone without any doubt.”¹⁴⁵

Though Benjamin may or may not be skeptical about the location of Moses' synagogue, he reports that “the overseer and clerk of this place of worship is a venerable old man; he is a man of learning,

¹⁴⁴ Burchard, p.26.

¹⁴⁵ Adler p.190, Eisenstein, p.100.

and they call him Al-Sheikh Abu al-Nazr."¹⁴⁶ This man's authority comes from three sources - age, proximity and piety.

Jacob ha Cohen was guided around Meron by a resident. There "a great and wise man told us, 'Do not fear or be afraid to enter, because it is righteous magic.'" ¹⁴⁷

Isaac Chelo apparently benefited from local tour guides. In Halhul "are a certain number of Jews. They take travelers to see an ancient sepulchral monument attributed to Gad the Seer."¹⁴⁸ The keeper of a synagogue told him that once a year, the voice of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai calls out from that place reminding the Jews to study Torah.¹⁴⁹

Meshullam of Volterra is let into the synagogue at the tomb of Samuel - a site of importance to Muslims as well - by the caretaker of the synagogue. Though Meshullam is visiting in the summer, he reports that every spring, Jews from all over gather at the place. Obviously this

¹⁴⁶ Signer, p.132, Eisenstein, p.42 has a slight variation on the name.

¹⁴⁷ Adler p.94, the Hebrew isn't very clear. Eisenstein, p.59.

¹⁴⁸ Adler p.135, Eisenstein, p.73. Gad the Seer is not positively identified and Eisenstein p.74, n.5 suggests that this is the grave either of the prophet Nathan or of Jonah, since the mosque of Nebi Yunus is located there.

¹⁴⁹ Adler p.134, Eisenstein, p.73. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai, who lived in the middle of the second century, was a pivotal figure in keeping alive the learning of the Torah during times of Roman persecution. See Israel Burgansky, "Simeon Bar Yohai" in EJ.

report is on the authority of the caretaker. In Alexandria, Meshullam reports that all the Jews there testify that a certain synagogue was built by the prophet Elijah.

Petiahia of Ratisbon, as we saw earlier, got a list of holy grave sites from the head of a yeshiva.¹⁵⁰ Not only did he have oral information, but the existence of a list suggests that there was some kind of well-known itinerary which Jewish travelers used.

All of these are informal guides, generally of the same religion as the traveler. But most travelers spread their nets a bit wider. They were often aware of local gossip and were willing to look to members of other religions for information.

Ibn Jubayr, the twelfth-century Granadan traveler, got information about King William II of Sicily (r.1166-1189) from Yahya ibn Fityan the Embroiderer, one of the king's own servants. Ibn Jubayr finds it remarkable that the king trusts his Muslim advisors and has even learned to read and write Arabic.¹⁵¹

At Cape St. Mark, "[A] Muslim who knew the Rumi tongue [Latin] had gone down with a party of Rum to the nearest inhabited parts, and we learnt that he had seen a group of Muslim prisoners...being sold in

¹⁵⁰ Adler, p.78, Eisenstein, p.52.

¹⁵¹ Broadhurst, p.341, Nassar, p.414.

the market.”¹⁵² Ibn Jubayr requires a combination of linguistic skill and visual inspection from his source.

Ibn Jubayr does not confine himself to official sources of information. He is tuned in to the local gossip. Hearing that King William is said to be gathering a fleet against the Almoravids of Mallorca (rivals of the Almohads) or against the Almohads, in violation of a truce, Ibn Jubayr lays out for his reader all the rumors that have been circulating about the number of ships and their destination. The fact that he faithfully reports what he hears in no way means that his information is accurate. In fact, in Trapani he reports a long and convoluted story about the Byzantine royal family and its relationship with Sicily and Islam which conflates some characters and mistakes others.¹⁵³ He reports on a rumored Muslim capture of Constantinople, which “if it be true, is one of the greatest portents of the Day of Judgment.”¹⁵⁴ He retains some skepticism, but does not dismiss the rumors out of hand.

A Bedouin confirms for him “a legend to which most Muslims are attached”¹⁵⁵ that one can hear the beating of drums at a mountain near the site of the famous battle of Badr. “We were assured, on the word of one of the Bedouin living in Badr, that they hear the beat of the drums

¹⁵² Broadhurst, p.27, Nassar, pp. 24-25.

¹⁵³ Broadhurst, pp.387-88, nn.173 and 174.

¹⁵⁴ Broadhurst, p.356, Nassar, p.433.

¹⁵⁵ Broadhurst, p.194, Nassar, p.228.

on the mountain, but he specified every Monday and Thursday for its occurrence. We marvelled greatly at his statement..¹⁵⁶ Ibn Jubayr conveys the tension between well-known legend and observation.

Sometimes Ibn Jubayr goes so far as to let local stories back up his own observations. Though must have noticed himself that women in one Egyptian city never leave their homes, he reports that "stories concerning them verify this."¹⁵⁷

When it comes to natural phenomena, Ibn Jubayr is willing to trust the information of non-Muslims. "Rumi [Byzantine] sea-captains who were present, and Muslims who had gone through journeys and storms at sea, , all agreed that they had never in their lives seen such a tempest. The description of it diminishes the reality."¹⁵⁸

Ibn Jubayr may consider even non-Muslim sources, (but with a grain of salt) quoting "the Rum of Constantinople" as believing that a certain city has buried treasure, "but God best knows of that."¹⁵⁹

(Not surprisingly, the Almohad Ibn Jubayr has little patience for Shi'ites. Though they claim that a certain mosque is the shrine of 'Ali, and Ibn Jubayr admits that "they have in excuse a legend in which they

¹⁵⁶ Broadhurst, p.194, Nassar, p.228.

¹⁵⁷ Broadhurst, p.57, Nassar, p.67.

¹⁵⁸ Broadhurst, p.28, Nassar, p.26.

¹⁵⁹ Broadhurst, p.267, Nassar, p.322.

relate that he was seen in a dream praying there”¹⁶⁰ Of course, “there is no authority attached to it. We but mention this because of its notoriety in the mosque.”¹⁶¹ Ibn Jubayr is even harsher when discussing another Shi’i tradition. “Perhaps for them dreams have more validity than the events of consciousness.”¹⁶²)

When Meshullam of Volterra has a well-placed source, he lets the reader know. A discussion of the tax agreement between the Venetian King of Cyprus and the ruler of Egypt “is the truth, for it was told me by the Gran Maestro of the Order who acted for the said princess in Alexandria.”¹⁶³ Jewish women in Hebron, who disguise themselves as Muslims, tell him and the local Jewish men what is at the Tomb of the Patriarchs there. In general, Meshullam is perfectly comfortable with oral sources of information. He knows that “all round Jerusalem there are many caves and in them are buried many pious and saintly people without number, but we do not know who they are except those marked; but it is a tradition amongst us from mouth to mouth from ancient times that there is no doubt to their truth...”¹⁶⁴ In describing a bad storm, he relies on the testimony of sailors that they has never seen such fierce winds. Similarly, he quotes sailors as saying

¹⁶⁰ Broadhurst, p.279, Nassar, p.336.

¹⁶¹ Broadhurst, p.279, Nassar, p.336.

¹⁶² Broadhurst, p.291, Nassar, p.352.

¹⁶³ Adler, p.161, Eisenstein, p.90.

that the Mediterranean is in the center of the world. In Alexandria he offers a higher standard, "all the Jews testify" that one of the synagogues was built by Elijah.

John of Würzburg reports the local gossip, though he tries to stay above it. Traveling approximately fifteen years after the Templars were supposedly bribed by Muslims to betray Conrad in the disastrous crusader siege of Damascus, he reports that the Templars "have the misfortune, I know not whether truly or falsely, to have their fair name aspersed with the reproach of treachery, which indeed was clearly proved in the well known affair of Damascus under King Conrad."¹⁶⁵

Ludolph von Suchem relies heavily on oral testimony, though he does mention books to support his reports. Ludolph tells of the fall of Acre, some fifty years before his visit "as I heard the tale told by right truthful men, who well remembered it."¹⁶⁶ He is somewhat defensive about the veracity of his information. He mentions that the earth, air, wind, and fire also fought on the side of the Saracens, as "we read in the stories of the loss of Acre."¹⁶⁷ Residents of nearby cities took up their belongings and fled to Cyprus (which Ludolph has already visited and reported on their prosperity of the exiles) A mysterious sailor

¹⁶⁴ Adler, p.193, Eisenstein, p.101.

¹⁶⁵ Würzburg, p.21.

¹⁶⁶ Ludolph, p.54.

¹⁶⁷ What would Ludolph have read about the fall of Acre?

appeared and took five hundred noble ladies and their jewels to Cyprus for nothing, according to "a most honorable lord, and from other truthful men who were present"¹⁶⁸ Perhaps one person told him the story and others chimed in as necessary.

Ludolph reports that Caesarea, now deserted "on the recovery of the Holy Land, came into the possession of a certain knight of these parts, named De Home, whose son-in-law's widow was living even in my own time, for I have often seen her and talked upon this subject with her."¹⁶⁹ Though the widow was presumably too young to have seen the events, still her testimony is reliable and Ludolph took her at her word.

Ludolph does not mind telling something fantastic if it can be attributed. "I have heard a very honorable knight say that a lance which he was about to hurl from a tower among the Saracens was all notched with arrows before it left his hand."¹⁷⁰ Relying again on oral testimony, "I have been told by a certain Knight Templar that once upon a time the Templars caught a young crocodile and drew his teeth, and that a stone which ten men could not move was tied to his tail, and he drew it alone up to a building that was being made."¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Ludolph, p.58.

¹⁶⁹ Ludolph, p.65.

¹⁷⁰ Ludolph, p.56.

¹⁷¹ Ludolph, p.77.

Ludolph excels at getting people to talk about themselves. He even socialized with some Muslim soldiers living in Acre who "have an especial delight in Germans, whom they straightaway recognise by their appearance and walk, and drink wine deeply with them, albeit it is forbidden by their law."¹⁷² Apparently he sat around drinking with them. "I have heard from truthful men who were present when these things came to pass, and the public talk and rumour of them still remains there, that so great fear fell upon the Saracens because of these aforesaid men of Gath, that as far as six days' journey therefrom mothers used to quiet their crying children with this word Scandalium."¹⁷³ Like Ibn Jubayr, he knows which way the wind is blowing and uses public talk and rumor as acceptable sources, if not for information, then for opinion and reaction.

Sometimes Ludolph seems too credible, though even here he tries to use experience as evidence. "There is likewise another river near Acre, on one side of which no serpent or venomous thing can live, though they can do so well on the other side; and it has been proved that serpents cast across this river die straightaway."¹⁷⁴ On the other hand, there are times he uses his own common sense (and local gossip) to question writings and commonly held beliefs. For example, he

¹⁷² Ludolph, p.61.

¹⁷³ Ludolph, p.63.

¹⁷⁴ Ludolph, p.63.

rejects what "man have said, in short, and have had it in writing, that the king of Baldach sent letters to the lords of those parts, and invited them to jousts and tournaments."¹⁷⁵ Forging exotic invitations may be socially valuable, but Ludolph knows they are fake. "There is no man that can remember jousts or tournaments ever to have been held in Baldach, for the people occupy themselves with other things."¹⁷⁶ He does not report on what those other diversions might be.

Apparently someone told Ludolph him about folkways, because the Bedouins gather "roses of Jericho" to sell to the pilgrims in exchange for bread "moreover, the Saracen women are very glad to have these roses by them, and when about to be delivered they drink the water which has been poured over the roses, and declare that they are most useful and valuable during pregnancy."¹⁷⁷ Since these are said to have grown all along Mary's route to Egypt, it seems fit that they would be valuable to women.

¹⁷⁵ Ludolph, p.76.

¹⁷⁶ Ludolph, p.76.

¹⁷⁷ Ludolph, p.91. The rose of Jericho, *anastatica hierochuntica*, is also known as St. Mary's flower, *kaff maryam* in Arabic. It is also known as the "resurrection plant" because of the way it quickly recovers when placed in water. This characteristic may explain its use in pregnancy. Umberto Quattrocchi, CRC World Dictionary of Plant Names, CRC Press: Boca Raton, London, New York, Washington DC, 2000, vol.1, p.130.

Ludolph did not just spend time in churches, according to one story. He tells of three "renegades, from the diocese of Minden, it was said"¹⁷⁸ He pities them for their current occupations - one water-drawer, one manual laborer, and one soldier. Apparently he had heard about them and tried to speak to them directly so he could find out their Christian names but "They had not the heart to tell who they had formerly been"¹⁷⁹ probably out of fear of punishment. They claimed to have come with their lord in the hopes of riches and honor but had been disappointed. Still, they had maintained contact with a knight who had returned to Europe. Apparently European travelers acted as conduits of information from locals to other travelers.

Other information – that this rock on the Temple Mount is a pilgrim shrine for Muslims though they dare not touch it - came to him from "Saracen renegades", a source he considers trustworthy.¹⁸⁰

At the Church of St. Mary Ludolph reports on the Islamization of a Christian site. "Out of this Church of St. Mary the Saracens have now made a church of their own. Yet all the story of Anna and Joachim and the Blessed Mary's birth remains to this day right nobly painted on the front of the church. This painting in my time used to be all devoutly and religiously explained to Christians by an old Saracen woman named

¹⁷⁸ Ludolph, p.92.

¹⁷⁹ Ludolph, p.92.

Baguta. She used to dwell over against the church, and declared that the picture of Joachim stood for Mahomet, and the painting of trees for paradise, wherein Mahomet kissed girls, and she referred the whole of the painting to Mohammed [*sic* - I don't know why the switch in spelling here], and set it forth with fervour, and would tell many more and more wondrous stories about Mahomet with tears in her eyes."¹⁸¹ Ludolph is sure that the pictures are Christian, but still gives the old Muslim woman some kind of respect for her genuine religious devotion.

Ludolph even gets information from the sultan's couriers. "Near Japhet is the almost-deserted city of Dan. This is the other end of the Promised Land, for the Promised Land reaches from Dan to Beersheba from north to south, and is about twenty-five miles long, and in width from Jericho to Joppa, from east to west, it is about eleven miles of this country, as I have heard from the Soldan's couriers, and from exceeding trustworthy people of the county, who also described the land."¹⁸² This tidbit suggests a number of questions. Why would he not know the size of the land? And why are the sultan's couriers talking to him?

Not surprisingly, Christian pilgrims reject local Muslim traditions that do not conform to Biblical accounts. John Poloner does not believe that the place identified as Joshua's tomb by the Muslims could really be

¹⁸⁰ Ludolph, p.98.

¹⁸¹ Ludolph, pp.100-101.

that, because "the text says that he was buried on the side of Mount Ephraim...I rather believe that this is the tomb of one of the children of Noah, or someone like them, whom we can prove to have dwelt in these parts."¹⁸³ Burchard mentions a Muslim religious practice in a site not venerated by Christians, but it has biblical connections. "The Saracens devoutly visit this place, and say that it is Joshua's tomb, which I do not believe to be true, because the text saith that he was buried at Timnath-heres, which is on the side of Mount Ephraim, near Sichem. I am rather inclined to believe this to be the sepulchre of Canaan, the son of Ham, the son of Noah, or that of some one of his sons' children, who may be proved to have dwelt in this very place, as shall be told hereafter."¹⁸⁴ He privileges textual knowledge over folk tradition without completely dismissing local authority. He does quote local Muslims as saying that the Jordan River exits and enters the Dead Sea.¹⁸⁵

Sometimes travelers want to convey information without committing themselves to its truth. For example, Theoderich does not believe that the pool at Siloam is from Mt. Silo just because they sound alike. After all, mountain block the way from the pool to its supposed

¹⁸² Ludolph, p.128.

¹⁸³ Poloner, pp.33-34.

¹⁸⁴ Burchard, p.17. See Judges. 2:9.

¹⁸⁵ Burchard, p.60.

source. But he presents both options and continues "without pronouncing any decision on this point."¹⁸⁶

Similarly, Benjamin of Tudela is careful, for example in the case of the wild tribes of Persia to attribute to other people the speculation that these might be members of the ten Lost Tribes of Israel. In Egypt he again puts speculation in the mouths of others. "People ask, what causes the Nile to rise? The Egyptians say that up the river, in the land of Al-Habasah (Abyssinia), which is the land of Havilah, much rain descends at the time of the rising of the river, and that this abundance of rain causes the river to rise and to cover the surface of the land."¹⁸⁷

Jacob the emissary, representing Rabbi Yehiel of Paris around 1238-44, is rather skeptical, presenting his readers the option of believing what he himself does not believe. It is typical of him to write something like, "[S]ome say that the grave of Deborah the Prophetess is there."¹⁸⁸ Clearly he is presenting some information by hearsay, as for example when he tells the reader that there are two possible routes from Acre to Jerusalem¹⁸⁹ or north from Acre to Damascus, Tyre, Sidon and Beirut. ("All this either by sea or by land..¹⁹⁰) Also, at Siloam "It is

¹⁸⁶ Theoderich, p.33.

¹⁸⁷ Signer p.131, Eisenstein, pp.41-42.

¹⁸⁸ Adler p.115, Eisenstein, p.66.

¹⁸⁹ Adler p.116, Eisenstein, p.66.

¹⁹⁰ Adler p.126, Eisenstein, p.70.

said that the waters heal the sick, and, therefore, the Moslems bathe there."¹⁹¹ He also passes on information that he thinks might be interesting to the reader, even if he set the example by not acting on that information. He tells his readers that on the Temple Mount "there are caves opening up into the wall of the outer Court and leading under the Temple Mount, and it is said that you can penetrate them up to the *Eben Shethiah*."¹⁹² Sometimes he offers his readers different possibilities. He says he saw the tomb of Nahum ish Gamzu, a Talmudic figure of the late first/early second centuries at Kefar Tanchum, but "Some say that he is buried in Kefar Raphadia and some in Kefar Damin Pharuz."¹⁹³

Isaac Chelo (1334) sometimes lets others speak for him. The tombs of the kings of Israel are so impressive that "All the strangers who come to visit the Holy City say they have never seen anything so beautiful."¹⁹⁴

Sometimes Chelo offers his readers options, but without guidance. "There is an ancient cave in this city, said to be the burial place of one of the seven prophets whose sacred bones lie buried in the Holy Land. According to some it is the tomb of the prophet Amos; and

¹⁹¹ Adler, p.117, Eisenstein, p.67.

¹⁹² Adler p.119, Eisenstein, p.67.

¹⁹³ Adler p.122, Eisenstein, p.68.

¹⁹⁴ Adler, p.133, Eisenstein, p.72.

according to others the sepulchre of the prophet Isaiah."¹⁹⁵ Once he quotes two writers and then gives up, leaving the mystery of a place name for God to decide.

We have seen so far that travelers give great weight to the observations of others, though they do not always accept uncritically what is told to them. The travelers are more than just passive receptors of information, however. They ask questions and occasionally go beyond the usual tourist attractions to gather facts. As we mentioned earlier, Felix Fabri takes advantage of a jammed lock to poke around in search of the buried treasure of Solomon. He was able to get in "for the Saracen keeper of the mosque one day trying to open the door and shut it quickly, hampered the lock with the key, so that the key would not move the iron bolt; so he went away leaving the mosque open: and it remained open as long as I was in Jerusalem, and more than ten times I have gone into it and looked round it."¹⁹⁶

Ludolph von Suchem was not searching for treasure. He was looking for an entire city. He was misguided about the location of ancient Babylon and tried, while he was in Egypt, to figure out where the city might be.

¹⁹⁵ Adler p.135, Eisenstein, p.73.

¹⁹⁶ Fabri, vol.7, p.304.

As I have heard from many truthful men and merchants, ancient Babylon, where the tower of Babel was, is some thirty days' journey distant from this Babylon, to the north-east, in Chaldaea, near Baldach. And you must know that, after having diligently for a space of five years conversed by day and by night with all men who could speak any human language, and after making daily inquiries of divers people, from all of whom I got some information, I was nevertheless never able to make out from any living creature any more about ancient Babylon, where the tower Babel was, than here follows.¹⁹⁷

Behind this elaborate apology and likely exaggerated description of Ludolph's information-gathering strategy is the image of a sorely disappointed pilgrim. As we have already read, Ludolph traveled off the beaten path and talked with renegades, among others.

Burchard also suffers from geographical confusion. At Sin, he asks both a Muslim and a Nestorian to tell him the name of the town.¹⁹⁸ Burchard does indicate that he usually asks around for information. He will not report that the dirt at the spot where Adam was created constantly replenishes itself because he "forgot to inquire into the truth

¹⁹⁷ Ludolph, p.72.

¹⁹⁸ Burchard, p.18.

of this."¹⁹⁹ In fact, he makes clear that his usual mode of operation involves asking questions. He claims that he only writes down what he has seen, either up close or at a distance, "and have carefully noted the answers given by the Syrian or Saracen, or other people of the land, *whom I most diligently questioned.*"²⁰⁰

Like Burchard, Theoderich actively collects information. "Indeed, in the year when we were there - on the Wednesday in Easter week - we counted eighty ships in the port besides the ship called a 'buss' on board of which we sailed thither and returned."²⁰¹ He also tried to count the number of patients at the Hospital in Jerusalem, a large institution that had a peak capacity of two thousand patients.

Meshullam of Volterra enjoys talking with the Jews of Egypt and apparently asks them detailed questions about the local economy. Some Jews in Cairo give him a list of exports "a list of all the goods which come into Egypt twice a year, which the gentiles take to Christian countries. There are 3,300 different kinds of goods, mostly spices and medicines."²⁰² Of course, sometimes a traveler came up empty. Jacob ha Cohen must have actively tried to gather more information about

¹⁹⁹ Burchard, p.92.

²⁰⁰ Burchard, p.4, emphasis mine.

²⁰¹ Theoderich, p.60.

²⁰² Adler, p.173, Eisenstein, p.94.

Jerusalem than he ultimately got. He remarks, "These things are known and none knows more."²⁰³

Ibn Jubayr is an active and curious student. He probably collected his information methodically. At Hims, Ibn Jubayr asks one of the sheikhs if the town has a hospital. He also watches out for unusual events. Apparently he himself saw Saladin's army returning from its unsuccessful attack on Kerack and subsequent burning of Nablus. "We left Damascus when the foremost Muslims had already come, each bearing the booty he had laid his hands on. The prisoners tallied thousands, and their number we could not ascertain."²⁰⁴ He had earlier prayed for their success and was gratified to see it. Not long afterwards, he sees an unusually large tree, and after asking around, learns that it serves as a border between the Muslim and Christian populations near Banyas.²⁰⁵

Putting the information to practical use

Medieval travelers gathered information from a number of sources, they wrote it down in different ways, and then they tried to

²⁰³ Adler, p.99, Eisenstein, p.61.

²⁰⁴ Broadhurst, p.314, Nassar, p.379.

²⁰⁵ Broadhurst, p.314, Nassar, p.380.

make it relevant. At the beginning of this chapter we saw that some travelers intended their accounts to serve as substitutes for a trip. Not surprisingly, those writers are the least likely to include practical information for future travelers. But other writers, who thought their readers might conceivably follow in their footsteps, tried to give useful advice. They dealt with the issues that travelers face even today - where to eat and drink, where to find lodging, what routes to take, what sights to see, what to do in case of illness, and how to avoid offending hosts.

Ludolph von Suchem is particularly interested in setting out an itinerary to be followed. His book is not just about his experiences, but rather a template for an ideal pilgrimage, and is addressed to potential pilgrims. Ludolph reminds the reader that traveling to the Holy Land needs the permission of the Pope. Also he advises on routes. "These are not the common pilgrim ways, but are good ones for seeing first Arabia and Egypt, and all that therein is."²⁰⁶ Ludolph is quite specific about the traveler's needs. He suggests the proper amount of food to bring (50 days for the trip east, but 100 days' worth for the trip back because the return voyage cannot count on having wind.) He is also very specific about when boats sail - galleys²⁰⁷ and the like leave

²⁰⁶ Ludolph, p.66.

²⁰⁷ Ludolph, p.20 differentiates between galleys and larger ships. He explains that "a galley is a sort of oblong vessel which journeys from one shore to

Europe for the East in August because they want to avoid being on the sea in the stormy months of November, December, and January.²⁰⁸

Because he is setting out the ideal route, he offers options for the trip from Cyprus to the coast of the Holy Land. All are about a day's journey from Cyprus. He lists the possible ports - Alexandria, Tripoli, Beirut, Byblius, Jaffa, Sidon, Tyre, Acre. Then he describes each, giving the pilgrim a choice. He makes the general remark that the cities "all have been given different names to those which they bore of old, after the Holy Land has been lost and won so many times, and therefore I will say a little about them, that you may know to whose lot these cities fell when the Holy Land was won by the Christians."²⁰⁹

Ludolph gives lodging and transportation advice too. In the Sinai, "there is no lack of anything needful save only water, which can be well carried in skins on camels. Good Saracen inns may be found at the end of each day's journey, and all that one needs except wine."²¹⁰

The lack of wine in Muslim Palestine is a serious inconvenience for some Christian pilgrims. Burchard of Mount Zion may be a monk, but he's glad to finally get a drink, and tells his readers how to do the same.

another, from one port to another, keeping ever close to the beach, and always putting into harbour ashore for the night."

²⁰⁸ Ludolph, p.12.

²⁰⁹ Ludolph, p.45.

²¹⁰ Ludolph, p.66.

"Half a league west of Bethlehem is a village called Bezek, which abounds with excellent wine, so that there is no better to be found in the land."²¹¹ Sidon "abounds in excellent vines...This good wine is made all the way to the Castle of Margat."²¹² An anonymous guidebook to Palestine written in 1350 provides information in a similar vein. "Then you come, five miles, to the village of Caromus. They make very good wine there. And there the cinctured Christians live. There used to be here a great hostel of St. John of Jerusalem, but it has been utterly destroyed by the Saracens."²¹³ Even Constantinople also suffers from a lack of wine, clearly a situation Ludolph feels the need to mention.

Ludolph also has some advice on the care of camels. They know when it is time to stop "and when they come to those places in the evening they lie down on the ground to chew the cud, and will go no further, which is as much as to say to you that this is the proper day's journey and halting-place; and then they are fed with bread and thorns. A camel is easily fed, and scarce drinks once in three days, whereas if they had to be foraged in proportion to their size, no man could cross the desert with them."²¹⁴ Presumably he tried to egg on a stubborn camel but didn't get anywhere.

²¹¹ Burchard, p.89.

²¹² Burchard, p.14.

²¹³ Guidebook to Palestine, trans. J.H. Bernard, PPTS, vol. 6, p.32.

²¹⁴ Ludolph, p.82.

Most of the practical advice centers on roads and security. Abbott Daniel suggests hiring private security. "The Saracen chief, armed, escorted us as far as Bethlehem, and accompanied us everywhere; without him we could not have traversed those places, on account of the large number of Saracens who carry on brigandage in the mountains."²¹⁵ Actually, the need for escort is taken for granted. "We remained four days at Acre, and having well rested, found a large caravan going to the holy city of Jerusalem, to which we joined ourselves."²¹⁶

Johannes Phocas, a former soldier, comments on the condition of the roads.²¹⁷ The anonymous *City of Jerusalem* suggests starting at Acre and proceeding to Haifa.

Some travelers do more than describing the sights; they try to convey some of the realities of the pilgrimage experience. Felix Fabri is especially adept at describing the crush of pilgrims, scorching heat, scheduling problems and even the way Christian pilgrims were locked into the Church of the Holy Sepulcher for the night by their Muslim guards. For all that the tone is personal and conversational, Fabri wants to make clear that he is interested only in describing things which are useful to pilgrims. So, "I shall not meddle with any description of other

²¹⁵ Daniel, p.50.

²¹⁶ Daniel, p.72.

places to which pilgrims are not conducted, or of the entire holy Land, or of the ancient condition of the city of Jerusalem, save as far as I may be incidentally forced to mention places which I have not myself seen."²¹⁸

Pilgrimage is, of course, a voyage with spiritual goals. So the anonymous 1350 Guidebook to Palestine is filled with lists of places and the rewards accrued for visiting them. "Thence you shall enter the chapel of blessed Mary...And there is absolution from pain and guilt."²¹⁹ and "Near the altar on the south side is a stone chair on which St. Helena sat when she caused search to be made for the holy cross of the Lord. And there is absolution for seven years and seven Lenten seasons."²²⁰ In some places "there is an indulgence for seven years and seven Lenten seasons."²²¹ Ibn Jubayr also counts merits for those who complete parts of the *haji*; but Felix Fabri is almost obsessive about adding up the rewards as he accumulates them. Fabri not only counts indulgences, he marks them in the text. (He amasses 2863 years' worth, by one calculation.²²²)

Fabri tries to create some kind of merging of the textual and spiritual experiences - a narrator assisted confluence of worlds. At St.

²¹⁷ Phocas, p.26.

²¹⁸ Fabri vol.7, p.206.

²¹⁹ Guidebook, p.6.

²²⁰ Guidebook, p.7.

²²¹ Guidebook, p.8.

Peters' cellars, when they had to sleep in caves, he imagines the pilgrims in dialogue with Jesus - he transplants the visitor into a cross-temporal discourse of comparison, so that the pilgrim cannot feel annoyed for lack of creature comforts.²²³ The conversation reinforces the chasm through a comparison of shared experiences - finding a bed for the night.

Benjamin of Tudela, a polite but distant tour guide, introduces people to his reader, then moves on to the next subject. Occasionally, he makes suggestions such as that at Tyre it is possible to see the ruins of the old city. "should one care to go forth by boat, one can see the castles, market places, streets, and places, in the bed of the sea."²²⁴

Meshullam of Volterra, the fifteenth century Italian, loves to give advice to future travelers. He suggests that they take along lemons for insect bites and stakes to tie their horses. They should ride slowly to avoid kicking up dust, and dress like Muslims to avoid taxes. "And in order, my friends, the things we had to do and everyone has to do who takes this route, I will briefly relate them."²²⁵ The advice extends not just to physical preparations but also to matters of etiquette (ranging from the table to the bathroom) so that the traveler will behave like a

²²² Davies, Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today, p.39.

²²³ Fabri, vol.7, p.223.

²²⁴ Signer, p.79, Eisenstein, p.25.

²²⁵ Adler, p.181, Eisenstein, p.97.

Muslim and avoid the extra taxes which so infuriate Meshullam. "Moreover, a man who does not know Arabic must dress like a Turk in order that he not be taken for a Jew or Frank, else even a Jubilee would not set him free from paying much...taxes; but you must wear a white cover on your head like the Turks and Moslems do, and there is great danger, lest, God forbid, anyone of the caravan should tell that you are a Jew or Frank."²²⁶

Ibn Jubayr often passes along useful information to the future pilgrim, such as that all the holy places in Mecca are open on Mondays in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal, in honor of Muhammad's birthday.²²⁷ Also he warns about impatient camel drivers who hurry the pilgrims before they have fully completed the day-long standing at 'Arafat.²²⁸ Ibn Jubayr is very specific about the availability of water in the desert, obviously a crucial matter for the traveler.²²⁹ Ibn Jubayr digresses in his account to tell his readers that outside Damascus, people are especially hospitable to Maghribis. Ibn Jubayr apologizes for inserting an aside that spoils the narrative effect, but explains that he felt it was

²²⁶ Adler, pp.181-182, Eisenstein, p.97.

²²⁷ Broadhurst, p.111, Nassar, p.132..

²²⁸ Broadhurst, p.178, Nassar, p.207.

²²⁹ For one of the many examples, see Broadhurst, pp.213-215, Nassar, pp.250-253.

necessary.²³⁰ He is obviously writing for other Maghribis and wants to arm them with as much information as possible.

Ibn Battuta sometimes offers information to the prospective tourist. "There is no need for a traveler on the Nile to take any provision with him, because whenever he wishes to descend on the bank he may do so, for ablutions, prayers, purchasing provisions, or any other purpose. There is a continuous series of bazaars from the city of Alexandria to Cairo, and from Cairo to the city of Uswan in Upper Egypt."²³¹

One interesting paradox ends this section. Some of the most practical, conversational advice of all comes from a writer who apparently never even made a pilgrimage. Marino Sanudo, a member of a famous Venetian trading family, presented two copies of his book to Pope John XXI I in September 1321 to encourage future crusading (which would probably have been to the benefit of the Sanudo family's business interests.)

Marino Sanudo advises the prospective visitor to allocate sufficient time for the holy sites. Specifically, a day is not enough for a

²³⁰ Broadhurst p.289, Nassar, p.350.

²³¹ Gibb, vol.1, p.40, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.67.

tour of Jerusalem.²³² He tries to set out an idealized route of sorts. "After this [Sepulchre], the pilgrim should go to Mount Sion. On the way hither, over against David's tower, one finds..."²³³ He strikes a knowing, conversational tone. And again, "Coming down from Mount Sion, one finds..."²³⁴ Keeping up the pace, he emerges from the valley. "After the pilgrim has visited these places, let him go along the road which we have said passes near the Virgin's Sepulchre, and follow Christ as he came to Jerusalem riding upon an ass."²³⁵ Though the chronological order has been breached, the attempt to follow Jesus is still there. The tourist guide continues "After the pilgrimages to Jerusalem, Mount Sion, and the places round about them, you must go out of David's Gate toward Bethlehem..."²³⁶

Sometimes Sanudo offers advice about things beyond the pilgrimage experience. He suggests that people who want to use a trip to the Holy Land as a starting-point for a journey to the Far East must cross the Sinai to the Red Sea. "For those who wish to sail towards

²³² Marino Sanudo, Secrets for True Crusaders to Help them to Recover the Holy Land, trans. Aubrey Stewart, PPTS vol.12, p.38.

²³³ Sanudo, p.41.

²³⁴ Sanudo, p.43.

²³⁵ Sanudo, p.46.

²³⁶ Sanudo, p.50.

India, to the south-west and the north there is the great wilderness reaching even to the Holy Land..²³⁷

In giving concrete advice, authors establish a functional relationship with their readers. In this kind of relationship, the advisor is clearly superior. Yet the advice (except Sanudo's) is based on real experience. All the writers started out in the same vulnerable position as their readers. Some travelers, like Ludolph von Suchem, Meshullam of Volterra, Ibn Battuta and Felix Fabri, let the readers see their mistakes. Almost all travelers give some indication of how they gathered information. Though the travel accounts are written in different forms, all are the same in that they mark the end of the travel process. The journey is not complete until it has been retold.

The irony here is that travelers need to reproduce accounts of their trips even as the very act of traveling shows that second-hand information is insufficient. The travelers themselves were not content to hear or read travel accounts. They wanted to go and see for themselves. Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta were obligated to perform the *hajj*, but of course Muslims who traveled to Mecca were always a small percentage of the total community. All religious travel, obligatory or voluntary, starts with the individual wishes of the traveler. But few travelers say so outright. Instead, they stress the religious benefits of

²³⁷ Sanudo, p.61.

travel, the desire to be near relics and graves, to perform the pilgrimage rites and to study. Though they will not credit themselves with motivating the trip, it is usually their very own individuality and need to connect with others that creates pilgrimage literature.

CHAPTER 3 - RELATIONSHIP

Travel writers are obviously viewers. But they cannot possibly notice every single thing they see, and they cannot write down everything they notice. The very act of writing is the first step in editing. And sometime during this editing process, the writers decide whether to be a part of the story they are telling.

The level of the author's involvement generally depends on the organizing principle that he chooses. Some travelers recede into the background as they write about places and only incidentally about what they did there. The earlier Christian accounts, and most of the shorter Jewish ones, fall into this category. These site-specific accounts rarely offer more than a glimpse at the writer. A good number of medieval pilgrimage accounts are, in fact, anonymous documents whose dates have to be guessed from internal evidence.

The longer travel accounts use the voyage itself as the organizing principle. In these accounts one is most likely to see not just the pilgrimage process and holy sites, but also the return trip. Whether these accounts are in the first or the third person, they focus on the experiences of the author. Naturally enough, these first-person accounts give a the closest view of the writer. We can say, then, that there are

gradations in authorial participation. Site-specific accounts are least likely to show the authorial "I". Travel-based accounts show more of the author, and first-person accounts show the most.

But even in first person accounts, the book is about a trip and the author is not always at the center of the action. When the author does insert himself into the narrative, it is usually in one of the four following situations - to bolster his reliability, to highlight some ritual activity, to recall physical danger or discomfort, or to assert national identity. (This last category applies particularly to the Germans Ludolph von Suchem and John of Würzburg and to the Andalusians Ibn Jubayr and Benjamin of Tudela.)

The authorial I/eye - factual and religious authority

The most common reason for the writer to make his way into the writing is to prove that he was diligent about gathering information from reliable sources. This is especially important when a traveler tells an unbelievable story. When Benjamin of Tudela reports that a man named Moses, a skillful archer probably belonging to an independent Jewish tribe from the mountains around Nishapur, was taken captive and ended up married to the daughter of the Chief Rabbi of Isfahan, he

is careful to put himself and his source into the story. "This same R. Moses told me all these things."¹ Benjamin's authority to relate events is absolutely bound up in his willingness to be part of them. We have already seen how Ludolph wanted his readers to know how hard he tried to locate Babylon.

Similarly, Samuel ben Samson (1210) lets the reader know when he left the larger group of travelers to investigate on his own, and even names his fellow travelers who found a way into the tombs at Hebron.²

In the fourteenth century, Isaac Chelo likewise functions in the narrative as gatherer of information, or to emphasize an otherwise impersonal assertion. Once he puts himself into the narrative to remind readers of his work checking facts. The grave of Dinah "bears another name also, which I have not been able to read by reason of its great age."³ For example, "There are also at Jerusalem excellent calligraphists, and the copies are sought for by the strangers, who carry them away to their own countries. I have seen a Pentateuch written with so much art that several persons at once wanted to acquire it, and it was only for an excessively high price that the Chief of the Synagogues of Babylon carried it off with him to Baghdad."⁴ The excellence of

¹ Signer, p.118, Eisenstein, p.39.

² Adler, p.105, Eisenstein, p.63.

³ Adler p.147, Eisenstein, p.78.

⁴ Adler, p.134, Eisenstein, p.73.

Jerusalem for which Chelo feels it worthwhile to insert himself in the text is in the production of texts for others. At Nablus, he becomes part of the narrative in order to stress that he could not read the Torah of the Samaritans.⁵ At Yavneh "I found a disciple of Rabbi Samuel of Acco, deeply versed in Kabbalistic lore, and he showed me ancient writings such as the *Book of Rabbi Chamaï*, the *Pirke Rabbi Ishmael*, and others."⁶ Chelo also uses his own credibility to tell that the voice of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai rings out in his synagogue every year, reminding the Jews to study Torah. Chelo gets personal when mentioning that he met two Andalusian Jews (one from Toledo, one from Cordova) at Ramleh, both in the business of manufacturing cotton, who are "men of wealth and position,"⁷ and he also puts himself into a moral tale, in a touching story told to him by a boatman about how no one escapes sorrow.⁸

The way Ibn Jubayr tells his story, he often manages to be in the thick of the action. At Mecca, for example, he himself witnesses the keeper of the Ka'ba fumbling for the key to let in an emir. Whenever pilgrims are asked for news, he is right there, though he never mentions

⁵ Adler, p.142, Eisenstein, p.76.

⁶ Adler, p.144, Eisenstein, p.77. Both of these are mystical works ascribed to early authors but probably dating to Provence in the twelfth century. At Shiloh, Chelo meets a German kabbalist who supports himself as a copyist.

⁷ Adler, p.138, Eisenstein, p.74.

⁸ Adler, p.143, Eisenstein, p.76.

whether he himself had information. We have already seen earlier that he actively gathers information and likes the readers to know that he exerted himself on their behalf.

Felix Fabri makes a point of telling how he wrote his account. In his need to be trusted, he asks the reader to visualize him hard at work. "For I never passed one single day while I was on my travels without writing some notes, not even when I was at sea, in storms, or in the Holy Land; and in the desert I have frequently written as I sat on an ass or a camel; or at night, while the others were asleep, I would sit and put into writing what I had seen."⁹ Fabri's writing style changes to accommodate the reader, and he explains why. Before reaching the Holy Land, he writes in a relatively smooth narrative/descriptive mode. This changes into a journal-entry form "usually beginning each day from the previous evening; for thus it is that one visits the holy places, as will appear hereafter."¹⁰

So the author functions as an authority. But he is traveling in his religious capacity, so it is not surprising to see him appear in devotion and prayer. And of course this activity only strengthens his credibility. Ibn Jubayr describes his *hajj* in detail. Burchard of Mount Zion, who is generally not emotional, becomes quite overwhelmed when he visits the

⁹ Fabri, vol.7, p.56.

¹⁰ Fabri, vol.7, p.206.

place of the annunciation on Annunciation Day, March 25. "I have said many masses at that place, and even on the day itself."¹¹ The twelfth-century Russian Abbot Daniel reacted emotionally when he first saw Jerusalem. "None can choose but weep when they see the places so ardently longed for, where Christ our God endured the passion for the remission of our sins; and thus, full of this deep joy, the journey to Jerusalem is continued on foot."¹² Samuel ben Samson, traveling not long after, was equally moved when he, like Abbott Daniel, approached the city from the west. "It was a moment of tenderest emotion, and we wept bitterly."¹³ Isaac Chelo mentions praying at the tombs of Rachel and Nathan the prophet, but does not mention praying in Jerusalem, perhaps because it is assumed.¹⁴

Even when not praying or performing a ritual, the traveler may still present himself as the bearer of proper religious teachings. Rabbi Jacob the emissary (1238-1244), who never inserts himself as a character in his travel account, takes the time to express his opinion, acting as teacher and defender of religious tradition. Petahia tries to

¹¹ Burchard, p.42.

¹² Daniel, p.10.

¹³ Adler, p.103, Eisenstein, p.63.

¹⁴ Adler, p.136, Eisenstein, p.73. At Nathan's tomb he prays for the health of his ailing son. This level of personal detail is extremely rare, but Chelo is writing specifically for members of his family.

teach blessings to a group of Karaites¹⁵ and in Lebanon, Ibn Battuta tries to correct a Muslim (probably a Shi'ite) who was not properly performing the ritual ablutions. In both cases, the locals do not accept the admonishments. The Karaites simply say that they do not have the tradition which Petahia mentions. Ibn Battuta was apparently silenced by the retort of the man he tried to correct. As Ibn Battuta tells the story, he "stopped at a place with some water, to make the ritual ablutions, and one of the men of this village also came up to make his ablutions. Well, he began by washing his feet, then he washed his face, without rinsing out his mouth or snuffing water up his nostrils, and ended by wiping his hand over a part of his head. I reproved him for doing this, but he said to me, 'In building, the place to begin is at the foundation.'"¹⁶ Apparently Ibn Battuta had no witty comeback and let it go at that.

But in general Ibn Battuta was quite comfortable assuming that certain standards apply equally in all Muslim countries. He even takes it upon himself to enforce these standards. The following story about his experience at a bath-house in Egyptian town of Munya illustrates the

¹⁵ Adler, p.66, Eisenstein, p.48.

¹⁶ Gibb vol.1 p.84, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.130. Interestingly enough, Maliki (and Hanafi) scholars hold that the sequence of ablutions is not obligatory, and in fact one does not have to repeat his ablutions if he began with the feet and ended with the face. Laleh Bakhtiar, Encyclopedia of Islamic Law: A Compendium of the Views of the Major Schools, Chicago: ABC International Group, 1996, p.27.

point. "One day I entered the bath-house in this township, and found the men in it wearing no covering. This appeared a shocking thing to me, and I went to the governor and informed him of it. He told me not to leave and ordered the lessees of [all] the bath-houses to be brought before him. Articles were formally drawn up [there and then] making them subject to penalties if any person should enter a bath without a waist-wrapper, and the governor behaved to them with the greatest severity, after which I took leave of him."¹⁷ Of course, Ibn Battuta did have some religious authority. He had been named qadi of the caravan almost at the very beginning of his trip.

Felix Fabri behaved in much the same way. He made his pilgrimage as the official priest among a group of German nobles, and so naturally enough spent a good deal of time preaching to his charges. Notably, he is willing to criticize the church. "It indeed appeared to me to be a great piece of negligence on the part of the Church that provision had not been long ago made for administering the sacrament to men who are in the midst of such great perils, and more especially pilgrims, who are enduring those perils for the love and honour of God."¹⁸ Thorough and pedantic as ever, Fabri then lists fifteen reasons why it would not be practical or appropriate to do so. Though he notes ruefully that preaching on board ship is difficult, and that the holier the day the

¹⁷ Gibb, vol.1, p.63, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1,p.100.

more likely sailors are to be doing heavy work, he is still able to use his position to his advantage. For example, he lobbied among the other passengers for an expensive detour to Sinai, because he had not visited there on his earlier trip and really wanted to go. First he told his patrons what he wanted and they agreed to help pay the cost of his detour. Immediately, he set about finding other like-minded pilgrims on the other ship. Fabri pushed them to commit to the extended itinerary immediately because he "should scarce be able to find out the truth about it when we were in the Holy Land or in Jerusalem; for in the Holy Land pilgrims are too full of business, and rarely, if ever, all together at the same time, and are disturbed in their minds..."¹⁹

Fabri often holds himself out to be a religious authority, which makes sense considering that he was the official priest to a group of pilgrims. When he encounters a priest who officiates in both the Eastern and Western churches, he is truly bothered. "This displeased me much, and I held that priest to be a heretic of the worst kind, leading the people astray hither and thither: for the two rites cannot be performed by one and the same person; nay, hardly in the same city, because of their disagreement in many important articles."²⁰

¹⁸ Fabri, vol.7, pp.141-42.

¹⁹ Fabri, vol.7, p.216.

²⁰ Fabri, vol.7, p.199.

Still, Fabri is usually excited to see a fellow member of the clergy. "I ran to meet him, and, greeting him, inquired whence he came, and whither he was going: but this poor friar knew no tongue wherein to speak with me, neither Latin, nor Italian, nor German, for he was a pure Dalmatian or Sclavonian."²¹ Fabri does not fault himself for not knowing the right languages. Later at Nicosia, the tourists are also unable to communicate with the local inhabitants. Fabri's listing of languages there is revealing. The sacristan could not "speak to us, because he was a pure Greek, and Latin was to him a barbarous tongue, Italian was Arabic, and German was Tartar."²² Fabri manages to show himself as a curious pilgrim while laying all blame for non-communication at the feet of the people he meets.

Fabri's story is a reminder that the universality of pilgrimage never fully eclipses the national identity of the pilgrims. The tension between the sacred goal and the pull of home is expressed as homesickness, as we will discuss later. For most of our travelers, it is not enough simply to miss home. They need to remind the reader of the superiority of their native countries. Felix Fabri, who begins his story at his home monastery in Ulm, refers frequently to "we Germans" and makes a point of the superiority of German travelers over the

²¹ Fabri, vol.7, p.174.

²² Fabri, vol.7, p.198.

Frenchmen and Italians who are also making pilgrimages. (Fabri was actually Swiss by birth.)

But surely the prize for national feeling has to go to the German John of Würzburg. In describing the churches of Jerusalem, he comments on the unappreciated German contribution to the First Crusade. True, he admits, the Germans fought but did not remain in Jerusalem. Because they "had no intention of remaining there...the glory of delivering the Holy City was ascribed to the Franks alone...Indeed, this province of Christendom would long ago have extended its boundaries beyond the Nile to the southward, and beyond Damascus to the northward, if there were therein as great a number of Germans as there are of others."²³ As if this were not enough, the Germans do not get their share of endowments. John complains about a certain church "which has been newly built in honour of St. Mary, and which is called the House of the Germans, upon which hardly any men who speak any other language bestow any benefactions."²⁴

John's asides are for the sake of his national pride. Often, though, authors are even more individual in their concerns. They appear in the text to tell about physical unpleasantness or even danger.

²³ Würzburg, p.41.

²⁴ Würzburg, p.46.

The writer in danger

For a traveler, falling ill far away from home was a terrifying prospect. Even at home, recovery was uncertain, but at least the sickness would not be compounded by loneliness and the need to keep up with a group. Ibn Battuta recalls that when he was running a high fever, "I actually tied myself on the saddle with a turban-cloth in case I should fall off by reason of my weakness."²⁵ Meshullam of Volterra complains that near Jerusalem, he had such a headache he could barely stay on his horse. Abbot Daniel was much more fortunate in when he was in the Jerusalem region. He writes that "we visited all those places without meeting infidels or wild beasts; no evil befell me; I never had the least illness"²⁶

Travel accommodations were not always pleasant. Fabri and his fellow pilgrims protest when they board ship and find that "the captain had caused planks to be put along the lower part of our berths, so that some came just by our feet, where we wanted to put our shoes and chamber-pots."²⁷ Along with illness and cramped quarters came dangers from animals, both large and small. After being bitten by lice,

²⁵ Gibb, vol.1 p.12, Defrémercy and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.19.

²⁶ Daniel, p.73.

²⁷ Fabri, vol.7, p.97

Meshullam complains "I swear that in all my days I never had so much pain as that night"²⁸ Lice were a problem for all travelers - Felix Fabri says that he and his fellow shipmates used to take turns picking the lice off of each other's bodies.

Of course, larger animals cause troubles too. In the Egyptian desert, Ibn Battuta and his party camp at a site "infested with hyenas, and during the night of our stay there we were continually occupied in driving them off. Indeed one of the animals got at my baggage, ripped up a camel-sack which was amongst it, dragged out a small skin of dates and made off with it. We found the skin when we rose the next morning, torn to pieces and with most of the contents eaten."²⁹

Burchard of Mount Zion, who had earlier had trouble getting a camel to obey him, seems to have run into trouble with reptiles as well. As he describes, Caesarea is bounded "on the east by a deep fresh-water marsh wherein is a multitude of crocodiles. At this place I fell into very great danger, but the Lord of His Mercy saved me."³⁰ One can only assume that he did something stupid.

A number of travelers appear in their own accounts testifying about the problem of finding potable water. Given that, in general, the

²⁸ Adler, p.178, Eisenstein, p.96.

²⁹ Gibb, vol.1 p.68. Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1 p.109.

³⁰ Burchard, p.94.

travelers were coming from relatively wet regions to relatively arid ones, and that during the sea portion of the voyage, they had to rely on stored water, this concern is quite understandable.

It also makes sense that travelers from Christian Europe are obsessed with staying safe from attack by the "Saracens". Though the fear is obviously heightened by the hostilities of the Crusades, most of the attacks seem to be highway robbery, the same problem that plagues Muslim travelers and forces them to travel in caravans rather than individually. To the Russian Abbott Daniel, the need for escort is taken for granted. "We remained four days at Acre, and having well rested, found a large caravan going to the holy city of Jerusalem, to which we joined ourselves."³¹ Daniel has very good connections, so that when he wants to travel from Jerusalem to Tiberias, he is able to go with the ruler of Jerusalem. "Baldwin, Prince of Jerusalem, was about to make was in the direction of Damascus, and to follow the road to the Sea of Tiberias, because it is that which leads to Damascus. Having learnt that the Prince would take that route, I went to him and, saluting him, said 'I should like to go with you to the Sea of Tiberias so as to visit all the holy places there. For the love of God take me with you, Prince.' The Prince permitted me to follow him with pleasure, and ordered me to join his suite; I very gladly availed myself of the permission, and procured

³¹ Daniel, p.72.

animals for riding. Thus, then, without fear or peril, we passed those fearful places with the prince's troops; without an escort no one can cross them; St. Helena alone was able to accomplish it."³²

Near Bethlehem, Daniel stays in a village "inhabited by a considerable number of Saracens and Christians...We passed a night there, by God's grace, and were very well received by the Christians dwelling there. After a good night's rest, we rose early, in order to proceed to Bethlehem. The Saracen chief, armed, escorted us as far as Bethlehem, and accompanied us everywhere; without him we could not have traversed those places, on account of the large number of Saracens who carry on brigandage in the mountains."³³ The system of hiring a private security guard seems to have worked.

In Daniel's case, the danger may have been from Muslim armies. But his main safety concern is robbery. Near Mamre "is a high rocky mountain covered with a large thick forest; the road over this frightful mountain is dangerous. The Saracens profit by this pass to fall upon those who risk the danger in small numbers. As for me, God provided for me a good and numerous company, and I was able to pass this terrible place without hindrance. It is not far from the town of Ascalon, from which the infidels sally forth in large numbers and assail

³² Daniel, p.57. Baldwin I, king of Jerusalem from 1100 to 1118, made a number of such expeditions against Damascus between 1106 and 1108.

travellers in this pass. It was upon this mountain in this pass that Absalom, the son of David, was killed..."³⁴ The present ever repeats the past.

The English pilgrim Saewulf also expresses his security concerns. Sometimes he is afraid of pirates. "But, through fear of the Saracens, we did not venture through the open deep of the Adriatic Sea, as when we came, for we were afraid of their fleet. And so we passed along the cities on the coast, of which the Franks hold some, and others are still in possession of the Saracens."³⁵ Saewulf is spared from a storm off the coast of Yaffo, then makes the treacherous journey from there to Jerusalem, "a journey of two days, along a mountainous road, rock, and very dangerous. For the Saracens, always laying snares for the Christians, lie hidden in the hollow places of the mountains, and the caves of the rocks...At one moment they are seen all around everywhere, and all at once they disappear entirely."³⁶

Theoderich is so nervous about his safety that the mere sound of Arabic throws him into a fright. "As we passed along this road we were met by a multitude of Saracens, who were proceeding with bullocks and asses to plough up a great and beauteous plain, and who,

³³ Daniel, p.50.

³⁴ Daniel, p.43.

³⁵ Saewulf, p.27

³⁶ Saewulf, p.48.

by the hideous yells which they thundered forth, as is their wont whenever they set about any work, struck no small terror into us."³⁷

So far we have seen writers put themselves into their writing when they need to bolster their credibility. They appear as actors who show that travelers can gather information accurately under difficult circumstances without ever forgetting where they came from. One Jewish traveler takes this technique a step further than the others. Jacob ben Nathaniel haCohen, probably a European who traveled at the end of the twelfth century, tells his story in the first person. Four times in the narrative he refers to himself not as "I" but by his full name.

The first time is to introduce himself and the difficulties of the journey. "I, Jacob, the son of R. Nathaniel ha Cohen, journeyed with much difficulty, but God helped me to enter the Holy Land..."³⁸ The last time reminds the reader of his identity. "Here end the words of me, Jacob ha Cohen, of all the sights I saw in the Holy Land."³⁹ The third time he is explaining to the rabbis of Jerusalem why the cisterns at the Mount of Olives do not fill up, and he quotes them a verse to support

³⁷ Theoderich, p.61.

³⁸ Adler, p.92, Eisenstein, p.59.

³⁹ Adler, p.99, Eisenstein, p.62. The Hebrew does not emphasize the word 'me' the way the English does.

this.⁴⁰ But what matters here is that he is standing "on the grave of [that man] four cubits from the site of the stoning"⁴¹ The narrator mentions his name, says he is Jacob, while standing over the grave of Jesus, whom he will not name. Jacob is, in effect, saying, 'I have a name and a reality that Jesus does not. And I connect it with the Bible because that text asserts my reality over his.'

The other time that Jacob mentions his name is when he has to disguise himself at Hebron to gain access to the tomb of the patriarchs. Here he again uses his name to assert his identity, to reclaim himself. "In Hebron, I, Jacob, entered in the guise of a Gentile into the cave which is the cave of Machpelah. The monks have built a structure upon it and falsely deceived the world."⁴² Jacob, like his namesake in the Bible, disguises himself to get at his inheritance. Though our traveler resorts to a ruse, he justifies his dishonesty by pointing at the dishonesty of the monks.

Jacob finds his identity so threatened by the events of his journey that he needs to remind the reader who he is. None of the

⁴⁰ Isaiah 31:9, says that God's furnace is in Jerusalem. See also Eruvin 19a (Eisenstein p.62, n.6)

⁴¹ Eisenstein p.61, my translation, his brackets. Eisenstein added the "that man" to clarify; Adler translates "by the grave of Jesus".

⁴² Adler, p.98, Eisenstein, p.61. The Hebrew for 'Gentile' here is *to'eh*, mistaken one - the standard reference to Christian pilgrims in medieval Jewish travel writing

events surrounding his trip suggest why he would feel more alienated than other medieval Jewish travelers, yet his discomfort shows clearly. Perhaps he is unnerved - and needs to reassure himself - in taking on the role of writer and seeing up close the worship of other faiths.

Relationship to the reader

Jacob's case is an extreme example of a writer reaching out to his readers for reassurance. For the most part, the relationship between the traveler and his audience is weighted to the side of the writer. He is the authority, and he lets the reader know it. The author asserts his authority, but it is never absolute. If he wants the readers of his pilgrimage account to share in the experience, he must cultivate a relationship with them. Readers have to trust an author in order to let him bring a strange world home.

One author brought home such a strange world that his medieval editor tried to make him more accessible. Towards the very end of his account, Benjamin of Tudela inserts an exhortation to the reader, one that refers to Benjamin and reader together as "we", and the Jews he visits or sees as "they". One editor argues that, "The style will

at once show that it is a later interpolation,"⁴³ and certainly it is dramatically out of character for the usually laconic Benjamin.

All Israel is dispersed in every land, and he who does not further the gathering of Israel will not meet with happiness nor live with Israel. When the Lord will remember us in our exile, and raise the horn of our anointed, then every one will say, 'I will lead the Jews and I will gather them.' As for the towns which have been mentioned, they contain scholars and communities that love their brethren, and speak peace to those that are near and afar, and when a wayfarer comes they rejoice, and make a feast for him, and say, 'Rejoice, brethren, for the help of the Lord comes in the twinkling of an eye.' If we were not afraid that the appointed time has not yet arrived nor been reached, we would have gathered together, but we dare not do so until the time for song has arrived, and the voice of the turtle-dove (is heard in the land), when the messengers will come and say continually, 'The Lord be exalted.' Meanwhile they send missives one to the other, saying, 'Be ye strong in the law of Moses, and do ye mourners for Zion and ye mourners for Jerusalem entreat the Lord, and may the supplication of those that wear the garments of mourning be received through their merits.'⁴⁴

⁴³ Adler ed., p.80, n.1.

⁴⁴ Signer, pp.138-39, Eisenstein, p.44. Eisenstein believes that this properly belongs at the end of the book, not at the beginning of its last section.

This Biblically allusive writing attempts to unite the reader and writer in a shared experience and to connect the reader to the text. In trying to create a relationship between the reader and author, the editor added messianic overtones to Benjamin's tour.

Other writers take more direct roles. Jacob, emissary of Rabbi Yehiel of Paris (1238-44) is a teacher. He apparently feels the need to urge his readers to understand the Torah literally, by showing them that Hebron really is in a valley, as the Torah tells, and that at the same time it supports a statement of the Midrash.⁴⁵

Isaac Chelo comes across not only as a teacher, but as a bibliophile engaged in conversation with another enthusiast. He portrays his whole trip as somehow enfolded within texts. He is always mentioning copyists and books. Tiberias, in addition to its tombs and hot springs, is a center of study. "Since the destruction of Jerusalem it has become one of the most important cities in the land of Israel. Here there were thirteen synagogues and a great number of schools. It was in this place that Rabbenu ha-Kadosh composed the Mishna. And that Rabbi Aaron ben Asher published the Massora. To this day still the city has in its midst a holy congregation, which studies the law day and night."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Adler, p.120, Eisenstein, p.68. The reference is to Genesis 37:14.

⁴⁶ Adler, p.146, Eisenstein, p.77.

Safed is a place where Rabbi Shem Tov b. Abraham ibn Gaon of Soria (b. Soria, Spain, 1283, d. ca. 1340) wrote his mystical works and his famous commentary on Maimonides, the *Migdal Oz*

Meshullam of Volterra (1481) wants to avoid being unpopular. Neither a teacher nor a tour guide, he is a storyteller who combines entertainment with edification and adds in practical advice. He considers the possible skepticism of his audience, assumes his readers are familiar with Italian and the large cities of Italy, and invites them to share in his thanksgiving at having been saved. Meshullam expects the reader to follow his adventures closely, so that he explains small details, such as having gone to Jerusalem with two Mamluks because the caravan did not go that far. He also tries to give the reader some moral instruction, to make his book edifying. "you see, therefore, that if we had delayed a single day we should not have been able to get through and should have been in great danger. Blessed be He and Blessed be His name who doeth good unto the undeserving."⁴⁷ He ends here with a prayer of thanksgiving.

We have already seen writers locating themselves in the text as gatherers of information. The authorial "I" exists to bolster the credibility of the authorial "eye." Because these are religious travels, the authority of the writers is often expressed in religious terms, pointing to the piety

⁴⁷ Adler, p.189, Eisenstein, p.99.

of the writer and of his sources. Also, the very knowledge of distant places is a mark of membership in an elite society. Muslims and Christians who had completed pilgrimages could dress and be addressed in a way that testifies to their special experience and knowledge.⁴⁸ Sometimes the authors establish credibility by translating foreign terms or by comparing strange places to home.

The writer who has established his authority continues to assert it throughout his writing by organizing and structuring the text according to his own plan. As the writer (or editor) explains the arrangement of the text, he is reminding the reader who controls what is shared and what is not. There are many sights the reader will simply never know about. The author sometimes controls what the reader visualizes by providing maps. Finally, it is the author who weighs and evaluates what he sees. He decides for the reader which information is credible. Some authors relinquish this control at times and offer their audiences a chance to disagree with them or to interpret for themselves the raw materials of travel.

However much he may be willing to share the job of editing, the author is still the authority, and he will find ways to let the reader know it.

⁴⁸ For a full discussion of knowledge of the exotic as a mark of the elite, see Mary W. Helms, Ulysses' Sail: an Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographical Distance, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Ludolph von Suchem blames the delay in writing his work on his duties as a priest - a not-so-subtle insertion of his status into the text. Despite the years that have elapsed since his trip, Ludolph expects the reader to believe everything he says, and he is only telling what he remembers clearly. When he is not totally reliable, he says so. For example, the balsam of Egypt has many curative uses, some of which he mentions and some he omits because "neither can I recall them to my mind."⁴⁹ The readiness to admit an occasional lapse is a way of highlighting the rest of his testimony. Benjamin of Tudela employs a similar tactic when he implies that he would be able to give accurate information if not for Crusader devastations. In one part of his description, Benjamin seems to be concerned with his inability to have more concrete facts about early Jewish life in Jerusalem to give his audience. This problem he blames on the Crusaders. "Facing Jerusalem for a distance of three miles are the cemeteries belonging to the Israelites, who in the days of old buried their dead in caves, and upon each sepulcher is a dated inscription, but the Christians destroyed the sepulchers, employing the stones thereof in building their houses. These sepulchers reach as far as Zelzah in the territory of Benjamin."⁵⁰

One way of demonstrating power is to translate words. In translating, the writer mediates between the reader and the experience.

⁴⁹ Ludolph, p.70.

Using and then translating a term from a foreign language “certainly makes for an effect of exoticism but also creates an impression of trustworthiness.”⁵¹ But the very existence of foreign words is a reminder of the division between reader and writer and of the author’s attempts to heal this rupture. Fetellus, editing or writing at the turn of the thirteenth century, goes out of his way to explain the meanings of Arabic words. In discussing that Hebron is known as Qiryat Arba, he notes that “*Arbe* ...in the Saracen language means four, to which is prefixed *Kariath*, which means city.”⁵² Throughout his account, Fetellus is particularly interested in explaining place names, something that travelers never do in Europe. John Poloner, like Fetellus, gives meanings of place-names, pointing out correctly that the “name of Mount Sion is, being interpreted, watch-tower” and that Siloam “signifies sent.”⁵³

Benjamin of Tudela makes sure to translate Arabic phrases into Hebrew. (which incidentally raises the issue of who his readers were. Jews from Tudela retained Arabic as their spoken language even after the Christian conquest.) Meshullam of Volterra uses a great number of Italian phrases either because he does not have the Hebrew vocabulary

⁵⁰ Signer, p.84, Eisenstein, p.27.

⁵¹ François Hartog, The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, p.238.

⁵² Fetellus, Description of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, trans. and annotated James Rose MacPherson, PPTS, vol.5, p.9.

⁵³ Poloner, pp.14 and 11.

for what he wants to convey, or because the Hebrew language doesn't have the word he needs. Very rarely does he translate. For example, the bird that supposedly removes waste products from the crocodile, "in the Ishmaelite tongue is *apis*, and in our language we call it *plinio tirkilo*,"⁵⁴ He does, however, use Arabic place-names, though sometimes he tries to return them to their Hebrew origins. The party "came to a place called Harish, that is Succoth, for in Arabic *harish* means hut."⁵⁵ Also, he translates 'Al-Quds'. On the other hand, Meshullam describes the *waqf* system of trusts without ever using the Arabic word for it.

Sometimes the writer needs to introduce new vocabulary in the reader's own language. This serves the same purpose as translation, though, in putting the foreign into familiar terms while reasserting the authority of the writer. Ibn Jubayr has to teach his readers new words, so that shallow pits of water are "*ahfar*, or in the singular, *hafar*"⁵⁶ The boats of Christian merchants are called '*al-salibiyah*' - cross-like, square-rigged⁵⁷ or "*musallabah*', which the Rum [Byzantines] deem the best method of sailing, since they cannot but catch the wind which comes aft of the ship on its course"⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Adler, p.165, Eisenstein, p.91.

⁵⁵ Adler p. 178, Eisenstein, p. 96.

⁵⁶ Broadhurst, p.213, Nassar, p.250.

⁵⁷ Broadhurst, p.313, Nassar, p.378.

⁵⁸ Broadhurst, p.332, Nassar, p.404. Broadhurst, p.383 n.132 says that the terms refer to the same method of square-rigging.

The editor may also try to soften the strangeness of strange words. Ibn Juzayy tries in the case of Ibn Battuta, and in so doing claims some authority for himself. "I have registered by means of vowel signs and diacritical points [the pronunciation of] those names of places and of men which offer difficulties, in order that it might be more useful in ensuring accuracy and in fixing the orthography, and I have expounded in detail all those that I could of the non-Arabic names, since they are confusing to people by reason of their foreignness, and the ordinary rules of analogy lead to error in solving their cryptographs. And I for my part hope that what I have sought to do will meet with acceptance from his Sublime Majesty..."⁵⁹

Visualization and Sensory Experience

Just as translation moves words from the category of unknown to known, so comparisons can enable the reader to see with his mind what the traveler has seen with his eyes. Comparison "has a place in the rhetoric of otherness, operating there as a procedure of translation."⁶⁰ John Poloner explains that the Biblical divisions of Judea, Samaria, and Philistim combined to make up the Holy Land "even as

⁵⁹ Gibb, vol.1 pp.6-7, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, pp.11-12.

⁶⁰ Hartog, p.225.

Saxony and Lorraine are parts of Germany, and Lombardy and Tuscany are parts of Italy."⁶¹ According to Meshullam of Volterra, the roads from Beirut to Damascus are "steeper than the Alps of Bologna"⁶² and the city of Alexandria is "as big as Florence."⁶³ Ibn Jubayr does the same, even explaining why the two places look alike. He notes that looking at Hims "you will find in its plain, in its vista, and in the form of its design, some resemblance to the city of Ishbiliyyah [Seville?] in Andalusia".⁶⁴ The resemblance is so strong that he claims Seville was founded by Arabs who had migrated from Hims. Abbott Daniel compares the Jordan to the river Snov. Ludolph is especially fond of comparative description. The Nile is "bigger and wider than the Rhine"⁶⁵ Mount Tabor is "in all ways very like the hill called Dezenberg, in the diocese of Paderborn,"⁶⁶ and the hot springs at Tiberias are "like those at Aachen in this

⁶¹ Poloner, p.23.

⁶² Adler, p.198, Eisenstein, p102.

⁶³ Adler, p.159, Eisenstein, p.89. By the time of Meshullam's visit, Florence probably had a population of over 60,000. There is no clear number from Alexandria at the time, but it appears to have been smaller. Tertius Chandler, Four Thousand Years of Urban Growth: an historical census, Lewiston, N.Y.: St. David's University Press, 1987, pp.475-76.

⁶⁴ Broadhurst, p.268, Nassar, p.324.

⁶⁵ Ludolph, p.76.

⁶⁶ Ludolph, p.125.

country⁶⁷ Ibn Jubayr feels the need to compare Messina to Cordova "for one thing always resembles another in some direction - is its having in the middle of the new city an old one known as the Qasr al-Qadim [the Old Castle], just as there is in Cordova - God protect it."⁶⁸

Even the mechanisms of comparison and description are imperfect, and the writers know it. Theoderich, though he relied heavily on book learning, ultimately finds that a book cannot adequately transmit information. At the Hospital, "no one can credibly tell another how beautiful its buildings are...unless he has had the opportunity of seeing it with his own eyes."⁶⁹ Similarly the new building of the Templars. "I could give the measurements of its height, length, and breadth of its cellars, staircases, and roof, rising with a high pitch, unlike the flat roofs of that country, but even if I did so, my hearers would hardly be able to believe me."⁷⁰ Theoderich does not seem as concerned that his writing will not capture the essence of ancient buildings; only the modern construction seems beyond his capacity to describe.

⁶⁷ Though Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) was best known for its chapel and its function as Charlemagne's capital city, it was declining by the late Middle Ages. The hot springs remained famous.

⁶⁸ Broadhurst, p.349, Nassar, p.424.

⁶⁹ Theoderich, p.22.

⁷⁰ Theoderich, p.31.

Theoderich describes the architecture and urban planning of Jerusalem as it relates to current events. "Now, the city, being of an oblong form, has five angles, one of which is transverse. Almost all its streets are paved with great stones below, and above many of them are covered with a stone vault, pierced with many windows for the transmission of light. The houses, which are lofty piles of carefully wrought stonework, are not finished with high-pitched roofs after our fashion, but have them level and of a flat shape. The people catch the rain-water which falls upon them and store it up in cisterns for their own use - they use no other water, because they have none. Wood suitable for building or for fires is dear there, because the Mount Libanus, the only mountain which abounds in cedar, cypress, and pine-wood, is a long way off from them, and they cannot approach it for fear of the attacks of the infidels."⁷¹

Because traveling involves replacing a sensory experience with words,, one of the hallmarks of good travel writing is its ability to give readers a "sense" of the places visited. Medieval travel writing offers a good deal of sensory information, in part because travelers wanted very much to rely on their senses to augment their text-based knowledge. Often they measure things in terms of the human body (e.g. "as thick as my arm", "as tall as a man"). The religious focus of these books does

⁷¹ Theoderich, p.5.

not exclude a desire to see the physical world. Pilgrim narratives mention all kinds of flora and fauna, natural and man-made phenomena. Pilgrims report on volcanoes, pigeon incubators, crocodiles, elephants, bananas and water-clocks.

Sometimes John Poloner seems interested in helping his reader visualize the Holy Land for its own sake. "Note that from the second arch of the bridge thrown over the brook (Cedron) at this place, it is six hundred and fifteen long paces to the first step leading up to the church of the Mount of Olives, of which steps there are twenty. I have added this that I may show the height of the aforesaid mount. At this same place beneath the rocks at the foot of the Mount of Olives there dwell husbandmen and shepherds."⁷² Similarly about Gehinom, where "there are fertile fields, because these waters run through them. When one has seen all these things, one must return toward the city by the same road by which we came."⁷³ Burchard also expects his reader to visualize, and so uses phrases such as "beside the road on the left hand."⁷⁴

Ibn Jubayr's descriptions, especially of the holy sites of Mecca, suggest that he wanted his audience to visualize what he described. Like other writers, he puts the reader on an imaginary path. "To your right (*ala yaminaka*), as you face the cemetery, is a mosque in a gully

⁷² Poloner, p.11.

⁷³ Poloner, p.12

between two hills."⁷⁵ He tells them in Mecca what the various imams and emirs were wearing. Also, he tells them that a building is within eyeshot of a Sufi khanqah.⁷⁶ He gives linear measurements whenever possible. "From the Black stone to the ground is six spans, so that the tall man must bend to it and the short man raise himself (to kiss it)."⁷⁷ He does not say whether he himself is tall or short, because he does not want the reader to visualize him.

Some of Ibn Jubayr's writing is obviously just to share an experience, as when he writes about being blown off course on the ship ride home. He tells how disappointed he felt seeing Crete on the left when it should have been on the right, about the dark bread available to them, and the fear of the storm. Anticipating a journey of fifteen to thirty days, no one had brought enough food to last for two months.⁷⁸

John of Würzburg also wants his reader to be able to visualize for spiritual reasons, so he mentions that the room in which Mary was born "is still shown there" as is the cradle of Jesus.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Burchard, p.52.

⁷⁵ Broadhurst, p.106, Nassar, p.126.

⁷⁶ Broadhurst, p.253, Nassar, p.304.

⁷⁷ Broadhurst, p.81, Nassar, p.96.

⁷⁸ Broadhurst, pp.332-335, Nassar, pp.404-05.

⁷⁹ Würzburg, pp.4 and 22.

Ludolph von Suchem is deliberately realistic in his descriptions. He reports vaguely that Jerusalem is "not over-long or over-wide, neither is it too great or too small"⁸⁰ There is a certain cynicism in his observation of the place where Jesus mounted the donkey that he rode into Jerusalem. "A good rider He must have been. Otherwise one never could tell that a man on an ass could have ridden down such a road, for this road comes down very steep and narrow from the Mount of Olives."⁸¹

Jacob ha Cohen trusts his senses and conveys sensory information to his readers simply for their enjoyment. Some of his descriptions are exaggerated. At Alexandria "there is a tower on the sea-coast called, in Arabic, Manara, and they put on top a fire at night so that the ships should not go astray and this fire can be seen in Acre, in Africa, and in Provence. So beautiful and wide is this lighthouse that two knights on horses side by side can ascend it, and there is a water reservoir above which there is a promenade."⁸²

Samuel ben Samson trusts his senses and tries to convey sensory information to his readers. For example, the spot where

⁸⁰ Ludolph, p.97. A very large German city in Ludolph's time had a population of 25,000, and an area of roughly 2.5 square kilometers. Tertius, p.6 and pp.195-209.

⁸¹ Ludolph, p.114.

⁸² Adler p.93, Eisenstein, p.59.

Abraham was circumcised "is a rock in the form of a tomb of three hands-breadths."⁸³ The staircase down to the Tomb of the Patriarchs is "twenty-four steps, a narrow stairway where there could be no turning either to right or to left."⁸⁴

Occasionally Samuel is skeptical about monuments "Nearby is said to be the monument of Seth. This we saw."⁸⁵ At the tombs of Hillel and Shammai, Samuel and his fellow pilgrims try an experiment to validate what they see. The experiment is carried out under the supervision of Rabbi Jonathan of Lunel.

At the foot of the mountain we found the sepulchres of Hillel and of Shammai, and thirty-six other tombs as well. Over these tombs is a cupola of a sort of white marble, the interior of which is adorned with reliefs representing branches of trees. Six wells are there. Here we prayed. We found that the first well on the right hand side was full of water, the second empty. On the left hand side was a third well half-filled with water and the fourth completely full. In the hall in the centre of the hall on one side are three tombs, and on the other side three, and in each chamber of the hall there are three tombs, and above one a slab near these wells, of which one is full and the

⁸³ Adler, p.104, Eisenstein, p.63.

⁸⁴ Adler, p.105, Eisenstein, p.63.

⁸⁵ Adler, p.106, Eisenstein, p.63.

other empty. The head of the Captivity ordered a wax light to be lit and search made whence the water came into the basins, but we never found that out. We then threw out on to the ground a great quantity of their water, but there was no alteration in its amount. This water is as sweet as honey. It is a marvelous thing.⁸⁶

Jacob the emissary (1238-44) did not see that, but reports on a different water-related miracle at the same place. "There the Israelites meet on the second day of Passover and pray and say hymns and, when they find water in the cave, they all rejoice, for it is a sign that the year will be blessed, but many times they find no water, but when they pray the water comes in a twinkling."⁸⁷ He sometimes lets the reader know when he exercises his own judgment. "Nearby is David's Tower, built of very large stones, obviously of ancient times..."⁸⁸ He also sometimes tries to give the reader a sense of the trip. "One can see Ramah from Rachel's tomb, about three parasangs away."⁸⁹

Meshullam of Volterra is particularly interested in sharing the sensory aspects of his trip. At Rhodes, he "saw the Gran Maestro face to face. He is a handsome man, straight as a reed, of French origin with

⁸⁶ Adler, p.108, Eisenstein, p.64.

⁸⁷ Adler, p.122, Eisenstein, p.68.

⁸⁸ Adler, p.118, Eisenstein, p.67.

⁸⁹ Adler, p.121, Eisenstein, p.68.

a long beard, about 55 years old. I also saw all the premises of the Synagogue with rooms in the College of R. Abraham Daphne, a German..."⁹⁰ In Cairo he offers a similar description of the sultan. "On Friday, the 22nd June, 1481 [he uses the Hebrew year], I saw the sultan [*sultano*] face to face. He is an old man of 80, but straight as a reed, tall, and good looking, clothed in a white garment."⁹¹ He testifies personally to natural bounties - in Alexandria "I never saw so much dew in my life."⁹² He and his companions not only saw flying fish, but ate them roasted.⁹³ Nothing impresses like a crocodile. "In the Nile I saw on many islets big serpents which are as large as human beings with very short legs and very hard skin-like scales...and although I know that people that hear this will not believe me, I cannot omit to write it, and I swear by God Almighty that I have seen more than a hundred of these serpents..."⁹⁴ The size of the pyramids is expressed in human terms, though Meshullam does not seem to have visited them himself. "They are very much higher than the foundation-base, and if a man stands on top of the pyramid in the middle and throws a stone, he cannot throw it

⁹⁰ Adler, p.156, Eisenstein, p.88.

⁹¹ Adler, p.170, Eisenstein, p.93.

⁹² Adler, p.160, Eisenstein, p.89.

⁹³ Adler, p.164, Eisenstein, p.91.

⁹⁴ Adler, p.165, Eisenstein, p.91.

outside the structure."⁹⁵ He is fascinated by the smallness of the stands in Cairo's market, but impressed by the mosaics in peoples' houses.

He gives physical landmarks, such as a palm along the Nile, for future travelers to find their way. Twice he mentions his companion Raphael getting drunk, once on "raisin wine a thousand times stronger than malmsey."⁹⁶ He treats his insect bites with lemon juice but still suffers terribly. In general, Meshullam shares his physical symptoms (ague, headache) with readers. He comments on ruins in Gaza said to be those of Samson. "Those houses are now ruined and desolate, but to this very day it can be seen that the court was in truth very great."⁹⁷

When something is not only impressive but also truly exotic, writers try to use descriptions that will make sense to the readers. Petahia's description of an elephant is implicitly contrastive with a horse. "Its head is not at all protruding. It is big, eats about two wagon loads of straw at one time"⁹⁸ It is interesting that Petahia describes how much an elephant eats but does not compare it with the size of a person. Predictably enough, he is most impressed by the elephant's trunk, which he refers to as a lip. "Whatever a human being does with his hand it

⁹⁵ Adler, p.167, Eisenstein, p.92.

⁹⁶ Adler, p.169, Eisenstein, p.92.

⁹⁷ Adler, p.181, Eisenstein, p.97.

⁹⁸ Adler, p.68, Eisenstein, p.48.

does with its lip; this is exceedingly strange and marvelous."⁹⁹ But even this wonder of nature is connected with political rule in the east. "When the sultan condemns anybody to death they say to the elephant: this person is guilty. It then seizes him with its lip, casts him aloft, and kills him...Upon the elephant's back is set a structure like a citadel, within which there are twelve armed warriors; when the beast stretches forth its lip they climb up, using it as a bridge."¹⁰⁰ Petahia already knew the word 'elephant' and expected others to know it too. But here he relates it to a known reality.

Arrangement

Not only do the authors determine how one visualizes the unseen, they also determine which places are within view by editing and arranging the narrative. They create deliberate systems for ordering their experiences, but first they decide what is within view and what is not. Some writers may choose to mention only those things which are religiously significant, though often they incidentally include far more. For example, Fetellus tells his readers that he is ordering his writing for their own spiritual benefit, so he mentions physical facts only to clarify

⁹⁹ Adler, p.68, Eisenstein, p.48.

¹⁰⁰ Adler, p.68, Eisenstein, p.48.

the spiritual journey. In recreating the stops of the Jews in their 40-year wandering in the desert, he hopes to lead his readers on a spiritual journey. "The significations of these stations, and a catalogue of them I have arranged so as to mention them in my work: through them the true Hebrew who hastens to pass from earth to heaven must run his race, and, leaving the Egypt of the world, must enter into the land of promise, i.e., the heavenly father-land."¹⁰¹ He names each place, along with its meaning (skipping a few), creating a sort of geographical history.

Burchard of Mount Zion, writing at the end of the thirteenth century, states very clearly that his trip is exclusively for the study of sacred ground. "Now, albeit I have traveled beyond this place [Tripoli] and viewed the country, yet I write nothing thereof, because I do not intend to write about any land save the Holy Land."¹⁰² In fact, the account reads very much like a geographical commentary on the Bible, which is exactly Burchard's purpose. "This description, I think, is of no small use for reading the historical books, and, indeed, the whole Bible, if it be understood, and also for marking each single place, and knowing all about them."¹⁰³

Ludolph von Suchem is conscious of his power to shape the reader's experience, writing, for example that he has heard "many other

¹⁰¹ Fetellus, p.14.

¹⁰² Burchard, p.21

wondrous stories of this mount, which would take long to tell."¹⁰⁴ As always he is conscious of his role as editor/narrator. "journeying onward from Mount Seyr, one sees many things which need not be mentioned on the way..."¹⁰⁵

For Felix Fabri, the decision about what to include and what not to include depends not on his desire to explain other books, but on where he is. Outside the Holy Land, he includes all sorts of interesting facts. Once the actual pilgrimage is in process, he is much more selective, though he is by far the most detailed writer of the group being studied. Before writing about pilgrims getting tipsy from drinking too much sweet Cretan wine, he writes, "As for the other things I saw there I would not write them down if I wished these 'wanderings' to be grave narrative; but as I promised in my epistle dedicatory, I often mix fun and amusement with serious matters."¹⁰⁶ Once he gets to the Holy Land, he is much more business-like. Fabri wants to make clear that he is interested only in describing things which are useful to pilgrims. So, "I shall not meddle with any description of other places to which pilgrims are not conducted, or of the entire holy Land, or of the ancient condition

¹⁰³ Burchard, p.99.

¹⁰⁴ Burchard, p.25

¹⁰⁵ Ludolph, p.135.

¹⁰⁶ Fabri, vol.7,p.33.

of the city of Jerusalem, save as far as I may be incidentally forced to mention places which I have not myself seen."¹⁰⁷

Sometimes travelers go out of their ways to differentiate between sites that are holier than others. Jacob, emissary of Rabbi Yechiel of Paris (1238-44) is focused on holy sites, so he divides the book into the Land of Israel and outside it. After returning to his starting point of Acre, from which he will go to Damascus, he consciously divides the book. "May the Lord hasten to show us his signs and wonders in our glorious Temple. May it be speedily rebuilt in our days. Amen! And these are the journeys that they must make who journey from the Holy Land to outside and wish to go pray in the holy Synagogues which were built in former generations and to spread their hands in prayer at the tombs of the righteous who were buried outside Palestine."¹⁰⁸

Medieval pilgrim writings generally address the needs of pilgrims and the actual condition of the holy sites. But sometimes the two goals are at odds, or at least that is how it seemed to the anonymous author of the *City of Jerusalem*. In one manuscript, the book begins with a defense of its organization. "Because most good Christians willingly speak and hear spoken about the holy city of Jerusalem and the holy places where Jesus Christ lived and died, we shall tell how it was at the

¹⁰⁷ Fabri, vol.7,p.206.

time when Saladin and the Saracens took it from the Christians. Many persons there may be who will wish to hear these things : those to whom it is displeasing may pass over this place."¹⁰⁹ He is aware of a mixed audience. Some are religiously focused and distressed by Muslim power, some (presumably also not happy with Muslim control) are nevertheless interested in the way Jerusalem appears at the present day.

The editing is conscious and the writer knows where his loyalties lie. He expects the reader to adopt the same loyalties. "Now I have spoken of the abbeys and monasteries of Jerusalem, those without and within Jerusalem, and the Latin streets; but I have not named the monasteries and churches of the Syrians, nor of the Greeks, Jacobins, Boamins, Nestorians, nor Armenians, nor of the other people who rendered no obeisance to Rome, of whom were many abbeys and churches in the city. For I did not wish to say anything of those people I named who do not render obeisance to Rome."¹¹⁰

The *City of Jerusalem* is divided in two parts. The first is a description; the second is a pilgrimage guide. The author is utterly

¹⁰⁸ Adler p.126, Eisenstein p.70, The Hebrew refers to the Land of Israel as simply "the land."

¹⁰⁹ *City of Jerusalem*, p.1.

¹¹⁰ *City of Jerusalem*, p.28, n.1 suggests that the "Boamins" are the Georgians, the only Eastern sect not mentioned.

aware of his two modes of description. The transition between the two parts, which, like the introduction, is not found in all MSS, is as follows. "We have told you how the Holy City was, on the day when Saladin and the other Saracens won it from the Christians. Next, we will speak of the pilgrimages; how the pilgrims went to it. Those who are of the West, that is to say, the Kingdom of France, and of Germany, and of the other lands which are in that part of the world, who would go to the Holy Land, must take the straight way to the East."¹¹¹ A final section of the work, also not found in all manuscripts, goes on to describe pilgrimage rites and sites in other areas. "All these pilgrimages which we have noticed are to the Holy City of Jerusalem and to the Holy Land of Promise. Now we will tell you of other pilgrimages which are to far-off places."¹¹² Both pilgrimage sections are entirely focused on the past. Geography is not of intrinsic value - it only serves as guide to get a person from one holy site to another.

Some authors do include a broader range of geographical information. Their editing takes into account not only the sacredness of the sites but also their relative importance and whether they are believable and do not make the account too long. When Saewulf was unable to travel on the open seas, he "determined to note down merely

¹¹¹ City of Jerusalem, p.29.

¹¹² City of Jerusalem, p.47.

the names of the islands by which I directed my course."¹¹³ John of Würzburg announces when he is abridging for the reader's benefit. "Now, however, lest the tale should appear foolish to the narrator and tiresome to the listener, were I to enumerate under what kings and by whom the building and destruction of the first, second, and third temples took place, I will endeavour, my beloved friend, to give the truest account that I can of this present Bethel."¹¹⁴ Perhaps the distinction between 'narrator' and 'listener' suggests that the book was going to be read aloud by Dietrich at his and John's home monastery, with John either reading or controlling the reading.

Ibn Jubayr is unapologetically in control of his work. "Now were we to describe every place we happened upon on the banks of the Nile, right and left; our book would be cramped by it. We therefore intend to include only the larger and more famous places."¹¹⁵ After a describing Medina, he writes, "Such is the brief and unstudied account of the monuments and shrines of Medina the Venerated that the dictates of speed have allowed us to recount."¹¹⁶ Whether he is rushed by some outside set of circumstances or by his own choice, he sets the pace for the reader. Ibn Jubayr sometimes gives descriptions based not on

¹¹³ Saewulf, p.1.

¹¹⁴ Würzburg, p.11.

¹¹⁵ Broadhurst, pp.50-51, Nassar, pp56-57.

¹¹⁶ Broadhurst, p.207, Nassar, p.242.

what he did and saw, but in a logical way that enables the reader to visualize. "We began (the enumeration of these Gates) with the Bab al-Safa because it is the biggest.." ¹¹⁷ At the end of a passage describing the Haram, he writes, "Let this be sufficient to you." ¹¹⁸ Though this is not at all an unusual phrase in medieval Arabic writing, it serves to remind the readers that all their information is filtered and fed to them. Netton has explained that Ibn Jubayr structures his entire work around the time, places, and purpose of his trip, and presents the experience as a total package to the reader. In doing this, he is presaging Ibn Battuta. ¹¹⁹

In the case of Ibn Battuta, it is the editor who completely predigests the voyage and repackages it for the reader. Rather than going in chronological order, he moves place by place, describing what happened in any given city, but since Ibn Battuta occasionally breaks his own rule and does visit some places more than once, it is almost impossible to sort out his chronology. Ibn Battuta dictated his memories to Ibn Juzayy, who conflated and rearranged them. From a casual reader's standpoint this was a positive step. But the third-party editing obscures the filtering of Ibn Battuta. What did he think was important, what did he notice, and what did he want the listener/reader to gain? It

¹¹⁷ Broadhurst, p.102, Nassar, p.121.

¹¹⁸ Broadhurst, p.97, Nassar, p.114.

¹¹⁹ Ian R. Netton, "Basic Structures and Signs of Alienation in the *Rihla* of Ibn Jubayr," in Netton, Golden Roads.

has been argued that the entire *Rihla* of Ibn Battuta is a frame story, with the author and editor stressing its artificiality.¹²⁰ Its ordered formalism may also reveal a structure of which Ibn Battuta was not consciously aware, a three part understanding of events, social structures; and geographic and economic structures.¹²¹

In any case, the ordering and structuring of a religiously motivated trip is something that the authors do quite carefully. Throughout the writing, they are in control of the flow of information while still catering to the reader. The authors aim to provide an edifying yet enjoyable work of tolerable length. The greater part of the information, though presorted, cannot simply be presented to the reader. Almost all religious travel writing of the late Middle Ages is organized into some recognizable scheme. When it is not, as for example in the case of Petahia of Ratisbon, the fault is probably in the copying rather than in the writing. A structure can be as simple as writing chronologically, as Felix Fabri and Ibn Jubayr do, or as stylized as using the human body. Another common approach is what I call the "wheel method." This technique, used by a number of Christian

¹²⁰ Netton, "Myth, Miracle and Magic in the *Rihla* of Ibn Battuta," *Journal of Semitic Studies* XXIX, 1 (1984) pp.131-140.

¹²¹ Netton, "Arabia and the Pilgrim Paradigm of Ibn Battuta: A Braudelian Approach," in Ian Richard Netton, ed., Arabia and the Gulf: From Traditional Society to Modern States, London: Croom Helm, 1986, pp.29-42.

travelers, imagines one city serving as a hub with other holy sites as spikes radiating outward from the central point.

There are, of course, other ways to arrange a pilgrimage account. An anonymous *Guide-Book to Palestine*, written in the middle of the fourteenth century begins at the beginning. Though some pilgrimages start in Acre because that's where their ships land, this author uses sacred geography, choosing "to proceed to Nazareth first; for it is fitting that we should commence our pilgrimage thence, where the beginnings of our redemption were."¹²² Marino Sanudo, about thirty years earlier, uses the same technique, announcing that "He that would visit the holy places of the chosen Promised Land, let him begin with Nazareth, where our salvation was begun."¹²³ Though Jerusalem may be more holy, he wishes to follow the chronology of Jesus' life, imposing his will for a sensible chronology onto the physical voyage. In Jerusalem itself the chronology gives way to a geographically practical route, but the pilgrim is still encouraged to follow in the footsteps of Jesus' life.

Burchard of Mount Zion uses the "wheel" method of organization. "Considering how I might describe this profitably, so that the mind of my reader might easily understand what I have to tell, I thought that I would choose some central point, and arrange the whole

¹²² *Guidebook*, p.1.

¹²³ Sanudo, p.36.

land round about it in due order. For this centre I have chosen the city of Acre, as being better known than any other. Yet this city is not in the midst of the land, but stands by the seaside on its western boundary."¹²⁴ Later on he does to Jerusalem what he has done for the whole land - imagining a center from which everything radiates. John of Würzburg does the same.

Theoderich gives geographical descriptions to help the reader visualize the land and arranges some of the account according to the human body, a system sometimes found in other areas of medieval literature. The arrangement is not strict - early in the book, in the area of Judea "as the eye in the head, is placed the Holy City of Jerusalem."¹²⁵ Later on, Jerusalem is the head and Calvary "shines in the Church as doth the eye in the head."¹²⁶ The metaphor continues. "So having finished Jerusalem, which in my story has the same importance that the head has in body, I must now put in the other places and, as it were, limbs of this body."¹²⁷ He also explains his organizational scheme thematically. "Now, according to the best of our ability, we have told what we learned with our own eyes about Christ and His holy places. We shall now tell what is known about His friends and

¹²⁴ Burchard, p.4.

¹²⁵ Theoderich, p.3.

¹²⁶ Theoderich, p.19.

¹²⁷ Theoderich, p.45.

about other places. After this we shall tell of some things which were seen by ourselves, and some which were related to us by others."¹²⁸

The writers impose their schemes on the reader. The reader obviously has no choice but to encounter the sites in the order they are presented. Some authors go one step further in exerting control over the reader's experience. They actually visualize for the reader by drawing a map. One of the most famous maps is appended to the work of a writer who may never have been to the Holy Land. The map of Jerusalem was drawn by Pietro Vesconte, as part of an atlas he drew in 1320.¹²⁹ It is the first Christian map showing Jerusalem under post-crusade Muslim rule, and is quite realistic, although it does show the city as having walls. In fact, the walls were destroyed by the Ayyubid ruler al-Malik al-Mu'azam in 1219 for fear of a Crusader reconquest.

Sanudo also appended other maps to his work. The map of the Mediterranean is lost, but there remain, in addition to the map of Jerusalem, a map of the world, of the Holy land, of the coasts of Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt, and a plan of the city of Acre. The maps are not particularly accurate, but John Poloner, writing at the beginning of the fifteenth century, probably used them as the source for the his own maps. Like Sanudo, Poloner divides his map into a grid. The lines have

¹²⁸ Theoderich, p.42.

¹²⁹ Levy-Rubin and Rubin, p.362.

nothing to do with longitude and latitude - they are just tools to help the reader in locating points.

Poloner's map is now lost but can be partially recreated from the text. The map is not easy to understand at first. It is a grid of squares, eighty-three across, twenty-eight in length. The lines do not correspond to anything in particular. He color-codes the map and gives the length of the land in both German and Italian miles. The map is a combination of the modern organizational skills with a past-oriented focus. For example, "Under square 19 is placed this mark $\wedge$. This is the place where our Lord satisfied four thousand people with seven loaves."¹³⁰ However, the description does not proceed square by square along the grid, indicating that the section of the account in which he describes the map (as opposed to the strictly geographical first section) was written after the map was drawn, not as he was visiting places.

Burchard of Mount Zion extends his hub-and-spokes approach to the land to his map making. Having made Acre the center of his trip, he also makes it the center of his map. "Thence I have drawn four lines, corresponding to the four quarters of the world; and each quarter I have divided into three parts, to the end that those twelve divisions may answer to the twelve winds of heaven. In each of these divisions I have placed the cities and places mentioned in Scripture, that it may be easy

to find the situation of each place, and the part of the world wherein it lies."¹³¹

Sharing in the writing process

As much as the writers control what the reader sees and in what order, the authorial control is far from absolute. Especially in Christian accounts of the Holy Land, authors are very often willing to allow the reader to share in the process of interpreting what the traveler sees. John of Würzburg presents himself as a neutral reporter, often prefacing information with "it is said." He weighs the testimony of Jacobite monks against German Biblical interpretation. Offering both explanations and then his own, he invites the reader to research the matter further. He is unwilling to be the final word. John of Würzburg accepts Jacobite monks as a source of information about the life and relics of Mary Magdalene, but admits that they are among competing sources. The Jacobites "admit that the body of Mary Magdalene rests in our own country, being buried at Verziliacum. This they declare, as I have heard with my own ears; but, as has been said above, our learned doctors say that the Mary who anointed the feet and the head of Jesus, and the sister of

¹³⁰ Poloner, p.26.

¹³¹ Burchard, p.5.

Lazarus, were one and the same, and she was once a sinner. However, the text of the Gospels is very hard to understand on this point, and causes even the most careful reader to be uncertain...If anyone wishes to receive more certain knowledge about this matter, let him come himself and inquire about the order and truth of this act from the more learned inhabitants of this country, for I have learned this in the Scriptures and not entirely from these men."¹³² We have here the inconsistent situation of John admitting that "the more learned inhabitants of this country" are a better source of information than his own understanding of Scripture, though that is what he chooses to rely on.

Burchard of Mount Zion, writing in about 1280, is intellectually honest enough to confess to his confusion about the location of Jerusalem's walls and to explain how the position he rejects came about. "It is a pretty large city, as I shall tell you hereafter, and does not, as some vainly declare, stand in a different place to what it did at the time of the Lord's Passion. The argument on that side is that since the Lord suffered without the gate, and the place is now within the city walls, therefore the city must stand in a different place...But as a matter of fact

¹³² Würzburg, p.24.

it has spread itself out, in width, though not in length...I have to the best of my ability traced out its ancient position."¹³³

Ludolph goes one step further than just laying out the facts - he invites the reader to help him in discriminating between true and false information. "I have happily extracted some of them from ancient books of history, and that some things I have heard from the lips of truthful men, all of which, in whatsoever places they are written or found, I have decided to trust to the judgment of the discreet reader."¹³⁴

Similarly, Theoderich involves his readers in the book, "without pronouncing any decision upon this point, let us tell our hearers that which we know to be true."¹³⁵ He appeals to what he has in common with his readers by distinguishing them from lay people, as in "This place the laity call Quarantana, and we may call Quadragera..."¹³⁶

Though the travelers were comfortable with visual and oral sources, they privileged texts over all. They were uncomfortable with contradictions among sources, but they were not afraid to use their own judgment. This also allowed them to control readers' reactions. The writers and their reactions define the experience for the reader, and the reader knows it. As we have seen, Abbot Daniel trusts his senses for

¹³³ Burchard, p.66.

¹³⁴ Ludolph, p.2

¹³⁵ Theoderich, p.33.

the non-religious sites like the Jordan river. Daniel is able to say just how deep it is because "this I tried and measured myself, for I have passed over to the other side of the Jordan, and have wandered much on its banks."¹³⁷ He has even drunk the water and vouches for the fact that "it does no harm, and does not derange the stomach."¹³⁸ He seems to have measured the oak at Mamre by putting his arms around it.

Often Burchard of Mount Zion measures things himself, to justify his information to his readers. He stresses his own experience, for example emphasizing that he spent time in Tyre, which is why he knows how the city looks. Burchard sees the pit into which Joseph was supposedly thrown, and notes that the surrounding region is good for pasture, which lends credence to the biblical story.¹³⁹ Burchard is willing to let his own observation override scriptural gloss. With reference to the pools of Jerusalem, he writes "And if you find it anywhere stated that this fourth pool was within the city, it is not true; nay, it is altogether impossible. I know that both in the gloss and in the text of the 'burden of the valley of vision' one reads that the upper pool was in the city, and had its water from the fountain of Siloam; but this can nowise be, seeing

¹³⁶ Theoderich, p.46.

¹³⁷ Daniel, p.29.

¹³⁸ Daniel, p.28.

¹³⁹ Burchard, p.33.

that the city is more than four hundred cubits higher than the Fountain of Siloam, and water cannot flow up to so great a height." ¹⁴⁰

Sometimes Johannes Phocas relies on his own common sense. Outside one church in Jerusalem "is a large paved court, being, I imagine, the ancient floor of the Temple."¹⁴¹ He also quotes some inscriptions, though hardly as many as John of Würzburg. In fact, he admits that he was unable to read some "because of the fading of the colours."¹⁴² When he can, Phocas uses architectural evidence, noting, "at this place there was once a large monastery, as the ruined buildings which remain at the present day tell us."¹⁴³ He did want to see some of the buildings he had read about, but was disappointed to find them no longer standing. "Of all the work which Josephus tells us was built by Herod, and which now is utterly ruined, nothing remains save one side..." ¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Burchard, p.71. The text of "the burden of the Valley of Vision" is the beginning of Isaiah 22, in which verses 9 and 11 speak of a "lower pool" and an "old pool" within the walls of the city.

¹⁴¹ Phocas, p.20.

¹⁴² Phocas, pp.9-10

¹⁴³ Phocas, p.35.

¹⁴⁴ Phocas, p.7

Relationship to other texts

Johannes Phocas had read Josephus and fully expected his readers to at least be familiar with the historian. As a rule, pilgrim writers are confident in relating to their readers, but deferential, practically reverential, in their relation to other books. Holy books were, by definition, sacred to them. But pilgrim writers were also respectful of geographies, histories, and other travel writers, even as they tried to join their ranks.

And of course, it was books that prompted the trip in the first place. There is a symbiotic connection between place and text. "The sacred sites demonstrated the truth of the text, while the text supplied meaning to the sacred site."¹⁴⁵ Through the Middle Ages, text takes on independent standing. "The text itself, no longer merely a reproduction, representation, fixation of acts and deeds, became a potent sacred object."¹⁴⁶ So that may explain the large numbers of travel accounts and the preference for text over observation. Travelers commonly use other books as guides and templates for their own experiences. Christian pilgrims re-enacting the Stations of the Cross may represent the most

¹⁴⁵ Eric J. Leed, The mind of the traveler: from Gilgamesh to global tourism, New York: Basic Books, 1991, p.142

¹⁴⁶ Leed, p.143

dramatic example of turning text into activity, but all travelers who follow a guide are reshaping the relationship between the read and the real.

Before the printing press began decentralizing knowledge, pilgrimage was the next best thing, along with searching for books.¹⁴⁷ This was true among European Christians and also the Muslims of Spain. The pilgrimage was primarily responsible for the fact that more travelers went from the west to the east than the other way. But there was also a great deal of travel for the sake of study. Because their society had a generally positive view toward travel, and because Muslims in the west saw themselves as living on the religious periphery and in need of establishing socio-religious connections, the *rihla*, educational travel, took on a major role in Spain. As we have noted, one almost had to have completed such a *rihla* in order to hold a government office.¹⁴⁸

All the travel writers surveyed here had positive attitudes to books. Most had read a wide variety of sources that informed their journeys. Medieval Christian travelers brought a good deal of literary baggage. It goes without saying that these travelers - all churchmen (with the possible exception of Saewulf) - were familiar with the Bible and expected their readers, often fellow members of the clergy, to be

¹⁴⁷ Leed, pp.156-157.

¹⁴⁸ Lenker, p.305.

familiar with it too. So accounts very often mention a story (e.g. the place where the Canaanitish woman spoke with Jesus) without telling it in full. The few stories that do get retold are almost always from the Hebrew Bible. (Pseudo-Beda in the twelfth century mentions events in Antioch from the book of Maccabees and Theoderich, also in the twelfth century, refers to Maccabees as well.)

The only other source that seems to have been read as universally as the Bible is Josephus.¹⁴⁹ Josephus is referred to by name by Johannes Phocas (1185), Burchard of Mount Zion, Theoderich, John Poloner, and Marino Sanudo.

To Jacques de Vitry, Tyre was also the birthplace of Dido, “who founded Carthage in Africa, which is now called Marroch”.¹⁵⁰ He does not tell how he knows this, but one can assume that he had heard of Dido before arriving at Tyre. Saewulf, an English pilgrim at the beginning of the twelfth century, mentions “Raclea, a fine city, from which, as the Greeks testify, Helen was carried off by Paris Alexander.”¹⁵¹ Fetellus identifies Sidon as the home of Dido.

¹⁴⁹ Josephus was a relatively reliable source for the lay of the land. Zeev Safrai, “The Description of the Land of Israel in Josephus’ Works,” in Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata, Josephus, the Bible, and history, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989.

¹⁵⁰ De Vitry, p.17.

¹⁵¹ Saewulf, p.30.

Felix Fabri shows his classical learning as he recounts the dangers of the sea. "Charybdis, according to the fables of the poets, was a very greedy old woman, who, because she had stolen the oxen of Hercules, was struck by Jove with a thunderbolt, and cast into the sea, and who, even to this day, prowls about the bottom of the sea, and strives to draw passing ships down to herself, that she may rob them as she was wont of old."¹⁵² Fabri's history of the city of Jaffa is a combination of Biblical and Greek tale, some of which makes no sense (i.e., that the city's name comes partially from Job) and some of which he tries to prove by archaeology. "That Cepheus was King of Joppa is proved by some most ancient altars whereon the ancients found his name inscribed."¹⁵³

Marino Sanudo, if nothing else, at least knew the Greek alphabet, as he reports that "the place where the Nile makes its chief division, and makes the greater part of Egypt an island, is called Delta; for the island is a triangular one, shaped like the letter Delta."¹⁵⁴

Ludolph von Suchem feels comfortable introducing classical history. For example, he notes that Rhodes was the home of the ram with the golden fleece, "of whom one reads at greater length in the

¹⁵² Fabri, vol.7, pp.124-125.

¹⁵³ Fabri, vol.7, p.236.

¹⁵⁴ Sanudo, p.57.

histories of Troy."¹⁵⁵ Ludolph does not necessarily expect his readers to have read a history of Troy, but he does expect them to understand a reference to "the ram with golden fleece."

Ludolph's research seems to have been wide-ranging. He says that Aceldama, the Field of Blood, was probably not bought for the full price of thirty coins quoting "a certain Eastern history declares that only the worth of fifteen pennies was bought, which, indeed, may well be believed, because it does not take up the third part of the field."¹⁵⁶

Normally a traveler does not have to read philosophy to prepare for a trip, but at least one did. John of Würzburg accepts geographical information from non-geographers. "Jerusalem, the glorious metropolis of Judaea, is, according to philosophers, placed in the middle of the world."¹⁵⁷

One of the most important sources for the medieval traveler was the writing of other travel writers. The observations of the French bishop Arculf, as told to Adamnan at the end of the seventh century, were a valuable source for the Venerable Bede (d.735). "In this account of the holy places I have, as far as I could, followed trustworthy histories, and especially that of Arculf, a Bishop of Gaul...From this we have culled

¹⁵⁵ Ludolph, p.34.

¹⁵⁶ Ludolph, p.110.

some parts and compared them with the books of the ancients, and we transmit them to thee to read..."¹⁵⁸ Bede also includes snippets of Latin poetry not found in Arculf, presumably of his own research. Bede, in turn, is the source for Bernard the Wise. For example, Bernard notes "of this sepulchre it is not necessary to write more, since Bede describes it sufficiently in his history."¹⁵⁹

John of Würzburg probably read either Arculf or Bede. Writing to the friend to whom he dedicated his book, he concedes that "long before modern times these same places...have been described by a reverend man"¹⁶⁰ Theoderich, who wrote at the end of the twelfth century, may have been the "Dietrich" to whom John of Würzburg dedicated his account, so he would have certainly read that. (He seems to have copied some of it, though Aubrey Stewart, based on Tobler, has suggested that both men copied some of their information from "a brief geographical and historical account of the Holy Land and its neighbourhood which was then much in men's hands, and which will here for the sake of shortness be called *the old compendium*"¹⁶¹)

¹⁵⁷ Würzburg, p.10. We discussed the position of Jerusalem at the beginning of this study.

¹⁵⁸ Bede, A Little Book Concerning the Holy Places, trans. James Rose MacPherson, PPTS, vol.3, p.87.

¹⁵⁹ Bernard the Wise, Itinerary, trans. J.H. Bernard, PPTS, vol.3, p.7

¹⁶⁰ Würzburg, p.2, and n.1.

¹⁶¹ Introduction to Theoderich, p.iv.

John Poloner refers to an earlier, probably apocryphal travel guide supposedly composed by Clement (*fl. ca. 96*), the third bishop of Rome. "In Antiaradus St. Peter preached for a long time when he was on his way to Antioch, as we are told in Clement's Itinerary. Clement also found his mother there."¹⁶² Burchard, de Vitry and Sanuto also prepared by reading St. Clement's "Itinerary." Burchard also admits to doing his homework, so that information about the adjoining lands "I have taken the greater part thereof from the works of the venerable father in God, the Lord James of Vitry, Legate of the Holy Roman Church in the Holy Land, albeit I have seen most of these places with my own eyes."¹⁶³

Felix Fabri does more pre-travel reading than anyone else. Not only did he read as part of a whole year's research, but he also used those accounts as guides for his second trip. "Meanwhile my wish to return threw me into a fever, so that no study, no writing gave me any pleasure, except the stories in the Bible and elsewhere which make mention of Jerusalem. So I read with care everything on this subject which came into my hands; moreover, I collected all the stories of the

¹⁶² Poloner, p.34. In antiquity and the early Middle Ages, Clement was the subject of a lot of apocryphal literature. Two books about his travels in the east were translated into Latin by the beginning of the fifth century and these seem to have been quite popular among the clergy. De Vitry p.44; Sanudo p.5, among others, used this source.

¹⁶³ Burchard, p.8

pilgrimages of the crusaders, the tracts written by pilgrims, and descriptions of the Holy Land, and read them with care; and the more I read the more my trouble increased, because by reading the accounts of others I learned how imperfect, superficial, irregular and confused my own pilgrimage had been."¹⁶⁴ He even recommends Burchard of Mount Zion, suggesting that the curious should "read the book of Brother Burcard, of the Order of Preaching Friars, which is in the Library of the Dominicans or Preaching Friars at Ulm."¹⁶⁵ He also read Ludolph von Suchem.¹⁶⁶

Actually, many fourteenth and fifteenth-century European travelers show so many similarities in the order and description of the Jerusalem pilgrimage that it seems likely they were all copying from a well-known guide book, possibly one shown to them by the Franciscans who controlled the Jerusalem pilgrimage at the time.¹⁶⁷

Ibn Jubayr clearly had time before or during his trip to read historical and descriptive works. In Mecca he reports that "I found in the

¹⁶⁴ Fabri, vol.7, p.50.

¹⁶⁵ Fabri, vol.7, p.206

¹⁶⁶ Fabri, vol.8, pp.535-36.

¹⁶⁷ Josephie Brefeld, A Guidebook for the Jerusalem Pilgrimage in the Late Middle Ages: A Case for Computer-Aided Textual Criticism, Hilversum: Verloren, 1994, points out that this hypothesis was suggested as early as 1880. She subjects a number of pilgrimage accounts - none of which,

writing of Abu Ja'far ibn ('Ali) al-Fanaki al-Qurtubi, the jurisperdent and traditionalist, that the number of columns was four hundred and eighty; for I had not counted those outside the Safa Gate." ¹⁶⁸ This seems to be the same "jurisperdent, the ascetic and godly Abu Ja'far al-Fanaki of Cordova"¹⁶⁹ who gives the lengths of the mosque in Mecca. Later on Ibn Jubayr refers to him as "our friend...whose recitations soften the hard stones in emotion"¹⁷⁰ serving as an imam in Mecca. Later still this same man is in Damascus with Ibn Jubayr, perhaps traveling together with him. Ibn Jubayr refers to him as *sahibna*, "our companion."¹⁷¹

Ibn Jubayr's information on pigeons in Mecca comes from the *Notes on Mecca*.¹⁷² He quotes it again twice and gives the name of its author, Abu 'l-Walid al-Azraqi. He mentions when he arrives at Samarra that Mas'udi had written about the city.¹⁷³

Also, the religious network comes into play. The ascetic caretaker at the Shafi'i tomb in Cairo was a certain Najm al-Din al-

unfortunately, is covered by this study - to factor analysis and identifies a possible source for all the writers.

¹⁶⁸ Broadhurst, p.86, Nassar, p.102.

¹⁶⁹ Broadhurst, p.100, Nassar, p.119.

¹⁷⁰ Broadhurst, p.146, Nassar, p.129.

¹⁷¹ Broadhurst, p.278, Nassar, p.336.

¹⁷² Notes on Mecca, guidebooks in general

¹⁷³ Mas'udi mentions it in passing, but I am not aware of a section focused directly on Samarra.

Khabushani.¹⁷⁴ Ibn Jubayr (and presumably also his traveling companion) "visited this man Khabushani, to be blessed by his prayers, for we had heard of him in Andalusia."¹⁷⁵ Other times throughout the book, Ibn Jubayr refers by name to speakers he heard. He goes to listen to speakers of all the different *madhabs*.

As we have seen before, Ibn Jubayr's description of the mosque at Damascus is apparently a mixture of his own observations together with information from Ibn al-Mu'alli al-'Asadi, "in a chapter that he wrote in a description of its building."¹⁷⁶ He quotes this writer more than once, and Ibn Battuta later quotes him also. Ibn Jubayr has also read *Fada'il Dimshaq*, the *Merits of Damascus*. Again, he quotes the multi-volume work of Abu 'al-Qasim ibn Hibat Allah ibn 'Asakir the Damascene. Also, he seems to have been familiar with the eleventh-century Persian account of Naser-i-Khusraw.

Ibn Jubayr has also heard things upon which he bases his trip. While at the mosque of Damascus he reports, "Men say that on the face of the world there is no more wonderful structure to look upon, none loftier or more marvelously built, than this dome, save what is reported

¹⁷⁴ Get El

¹⁷⁵ Broadhurst, p.41, Nassar, p.44.

¹⁷⁶ Broadhurst, p.272, Nassar, p.328, and n.7 there gives some information on him. See also Broadhurst, p.286, Nassar, p.345, where the book is referred to as a "*ta'rikh*", or chronicle.

of the Dome (of the Rock) in Jerusalem, which is said to be still higher in the skies than this."¹⁷⁷

One thing Ibn Jubayr does not have a handle on is the history of the crusades. Using as his source an eyewitness, he gives an incorrect date for the fall of Tyre to the crusaders.¹⁷⁸

Ibn Battuta, like Ibn Jubayr, was widely read. He suggests that the reader interested in finding out more about Alexandria should read *The Book of Ways* by Abu 'Ubayd al-Bakri (1028-94), an Andalusian whose multi-volume geography is now mostly lost. To supplement his description at Hebron, Ibn Battuta quotes a book and author - unknown to his modern editor, Ali b. Ja'far al-Razi's *Al Mufsir lil-Qulub 'an sihhat qabr Ibrahim was 'ishaq wa-Ya'qub*. He also quotes *The Book of the Marker [or Embroiderer] in explanation of the Sahih of Muslim* by al-Qurtubi¹⁷⁹.

One of the books Ibn Battuta (or his editor, Ibn Juzayy) seems to know best is Ibn Jubayr's own *Rihla*. When Ibn Battuta comes to describe Aleppo he writes, "Abu'l Husayn Ibn Jubayr has expressed himself thus describing it" and quotes verbatim Ibn Jubayr's extended

¹⁷⁷ Broadhurst, p.308, Nassar, p.372.

¹⁷⁸ Broadhurst, p.321, Nassar, p.389.

¹⁷⁹ Dates for al-Qurtubi

metaphor of the city as comely woman.¹⁸⁰ When he arrives at Damascus, he again says that words fail, "but nothing is more brilliant than the language of Abu'l-Hasan Ibn Jubayr (God's mercy upon him)"¹⁸¹ He again quotes extensively, and also mentions another traveler, one Shams al-Din al Qaysi, who also quoted Ibn Jubayr and added some of his own observations. Ibn Battuta also implies that he has read some books on the wonders of Damascus, though he does not say which.¹⁸²

Medieval Jewish travelers also had their expectations shaped by their readings. None of them seems to have operated like the German monk Felix Fabri, who in the 15th-century spent a full year reading travel accounts. Jewish travel writing barely existed as a genre before the twelfth century. But none of the travelers went as a completely blank slate, either. The travelers under review were all relatively educated. Their information - and often their terminology - is from the Bible, sometimes the Talmud. Many were familiar with *Josippon*, the tenth-century Hebrew paraphrase of Josephus' *The Jewish Wars* which enjoyed a relatively wide circulation in medieval Europe.¹⁸³ Benjamin of

¹⁸⁰ Gibb vol.1, p.94, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, pp.146-48.

¹⁸¹ Gibb vol.1, p.118, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.190.

¹⁸² Gibb, p.128, n.216 gives options.

¹⁸³ The work was known among non-Jews as well. The Andalusian legal scholar and poet Ibn Hazm (d.1063) refers to it, having probably read it in the Arabic

Tudela seems to have read Josippon, because, like him, he attributes Romulus' building of a road and fortifications from Sorrento to Naples to a fear of attack by King David.¹⁸⁴ Similarly, he says that the city of Patras was built by Antipater.¹⁸⁵ Benjamin does not, however, attribute the stories to any particular source.

Some of the travelers clearly had historical knowledge of things outside Jewish tradition. Jacob ha Cohen expects his readers to have heard of Alexander and Aristotle. Meshullam of Volterra quotes Pliny's book on natural history as saying that crocodiles can grow as long as eighteen feet, though the longest one he saw was five feet long.¹⁸⁶

Some of the travelers even had sketchy guidebooks to follow. These unknown and unnamed books, perhaps just ad hoc lists, seem to be focused entirely on the spiritual experience of visiting the holy sites, but perhaps like the *haji* literature that instructed Muslims on proper pilgrimage ritual, were incidentally geographical. Petahia traveled with a list of graves of holy people. Rabbi Jacob, messenger of Rabbi Yehiel of Paris, who traveled in the middle of the 13th century, also probably had with him a guide to graves in the Holy Land. The lists may have

translation made in the early eleventh century. David Fluser, "Josippon" in EJ.

¹⁸⁴ Josippon, *Sefer Yosifon*, ed. David Fluser, 2 vols., Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1978-80, vol.1, p.18.

¹⁸⁵ Josippon, vol.1, p.484 says only that Antipater renamed the city.

expanded over time into full-fledged pilgrimage manuals. When Meshullam of Volterra arrives at Jerusalem in the late fifteenth century he recites "the appropriate prayer which I had in a small book (*kuntres*, pamphlet)."¹⁸⁷

Jewish pilgrimage from Europe to the Land of Israel expanded at about the same time as Christian pilgrimage, and Jewish travel writing as a genre is clearly based on the Christian *Itineraria*. But even if this imitation of form were conscious, the first Jewish travel writers show no indication of knowing that travel writing existed as a genre. Benjamin of Tudela's book is full of "matters not previously heard of in the land of Sepharad"¹⁸⁸ - or at least not known to Jews. By the fourteenth century, travelers are aware that they are working in a known field. Isaac Chelo, who seems to be on a study tour or book-buying jaunt, quotes and paraphrases Benjamin of Tudela and expects his readers to have heard of him. He writes that the Western Wall is the place where Jews go to pray, "as Rabbi Benjamin has already related."¹⁸⁹ Sometimes the lapse of one hundred and fifty-odd years means that things have changed from Benjamin's telling. For example, in Chelo's time that there are no

¹⁸⁶ Adler, p.164, Eisenstein, p.91.

¹⁸⁷ Adler, p.189, Eisenstein, p.99.

¹⁸⁸ Signer, p.55, Eisenstein, p.18.

¹⁸⁹ Adler, p.131, Eisenstein, p.72. He is referred to as "Benjamin the traveler" - "*ha-nose'a*"

Samaritans at Caesarea.¹⁹⁰ Chelo also refers to “the great author” as having told that only the prophetess Huldah and the kings of Israel were buried inside Jerusalem.¹⁹¹ He certainly read some geographical works but does not tell which. Struggling over the original name of Ramleh, Chelo writes, “Several persons have assured me that Ramleh was Modin: others maintain that it is Thimna. In one author I have found that this city is called Palestine, in another writer that its name is Rama. God alone knows what the truth of this matter is.”¹⁹² He tells of knowing about sorcerers at Capernaum from the history of Chanina, nephew of Rabbi Joshua.¹⁹³

Jewish travelers, like their Muslim and Christian counterparts, drew their information from a wide variety of sources, but only in one case did a traveler draw from the account of another. This relatively new genre was not self-conscious or self-referential. Instead, it was created anew with each traveler. If one can discuss the literary self-awareness of the writers, it might be possible to say that Christian pilgrims expected to be part of a genre, the Muslims expected to be widely-circulated, and the Jews seem to have had some minor expectations as well.

¹⁹⁰ Adler, p.143, Eisenstein, p.76. Again Benjamin is “the traveler.”

¹⁹¹ Adler, p.132, Eisenstein p.72

¹⁹² Adler, p.138. Eisenstein p.75 n.6. Benjamin calls it Rama.

¹⁹³ Adler, p.147 Eisenstein p.78 n.3, says to look in *Menachot* 65 and *Kohhelet Rabbah* 1:25.

The real versus the expected

Preparatory reading created expectations which were not always met. Sometimes, as in the cases of the Red Sea, what the travelers see does not match with what they were expecting. One test case for the issue of real versus expected scenery is Lot's wife. Genesis 19:26 tells that she was turned into a pillar of salt for having turned back to look at the destruction of Sodom. Most of the travelers expect to see the pillar, and some do.

Theoderich was much impressed by the desolation around the Dead Sea. Naturally, Lot's wife is still there, changing in size along with the moon. John Poloner, who apparently did not visit the Dead Sea himself, still has a detailed description. "On its eastern shore stands Zoar in Arabia, where is the statue of salt into which Lot's wife was turned, which it is dangerous to go and see because of the Midianites who dwell there. The sea sometimes swells so high as to cover the whole of the statue, and again it sinks till the statue can be seen at one time as far as the breast, at another as far as the knees..."¹⁹⁴ Not only does he see Lot's wife, but the pillar is so well-formed that he can make

¹⁹⁴ Poloner, p.39.

out individual body parts. The stench and desolation affect the entire surrounding area. Like other travelers, Burchard wants to see the Dead Sea but is turned away. He is absolutely convinced that he should be able to see Lot's wife. Some captives showed Ludolph and his travel companions a statue of Lot's wife, "which we could see plainly a long way off."¹⁹⁵ We are meant to understand that the ravages of time are not as powerful as divine retribution, because the pillar of salt still stands even though "as for the buildings which stood there before the great destruction, no traces of them can be seen."¹⁹⁶ No late medieval Christian traveler is willing to be skeptical about this particular site.

Describing the view from the mountains around Jerusalem, Benjamin of Tudela mentions the famous biblical story. "From the Mount of Olives one sees the Sea of Sodom (Dead Sea), and at a distance of two parasangs from the Sea of Sodom is the Pillar of Salt into which Lot's wife was turned; the sheep lick it continually, but afterwards it regains its original shape."¹⁹⁷ Clearly, he did not visit the area but only mentions it for its fame and proximity to Jerusalem. The story of sheep licking the pillar seems an interesting way to integrate a real concern (how could salt just stay there for so long?) with a story of a preserved monument.

¹⁹⁵ Ludolph, p.118.

¹⁹⁶ Ludolph, p.116.

¹⁹⁷ Signer, p.84, Eisenstein, p.27, refers to *Berakhot* 54.

Petahia's visit to Sodom did not yield any exciting news. "As to the pillar of salt, he said that he did not see it and that it no longer existed. Nor did he see the stones which Joshua erected."¹⁹⁸ Clearly Petahia's editor imposed his own concerns on the book, making it difficult for the reader to know exactly what Petahia himself was looking at and for. (But easier to know what interested Petahia's audience.)

Another relic that Jewish travelers notice is Noah's ark. "It is a distance of four miles to the place where Noah's ark rested, but Omar ben al Khataab took the ark from the two mountains and made it into a mosque for the Mohammedans."¹⁹⁹

Benjamin also tells about the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, the Tower of Babel and the furnace into which Hannania, Mishaël and Azariah were thrown. But all of these are past Baghdad and while he has some details about them, there is no reason to believe that he was actually in those places.

Jacob ha Cohen does not mention either Lot's wife or Noah's ark, and neither does Samuel ben Samson (1210). Jacob the emissary of Rabbi

¹⁹⁸ Adler, p.89, Eisenstein, p56.

¹⁹⁹ Signer p.94, Eisenstein, p.30. According to Adler, quoted in Signer, and Eisenstein p.31, n.2., Josephus said the ark still existed in his day, and Petahia mentions it again 20 years later as being stuck. Any Muslim sources on Noah's ark???

Yechiel of Paris (1238-44) does not see the ark itself, but he does note the spot where Noah is said to have entered the Ark.

Meshullam of Volterra in the fifteenth century does not mention either Lot's wife or Noah's ark, but he sees ruined buildings in Gaza which he believes were pulled down by Samson.²⁰⁰

But if Jewish travelers are not overly concerned with exact locations of Biblical events (at least those outside Jerusalem) they are interested in believing that the east is filled with Biblically-connected monuments. Benjamin of Tudela has a tendency to attribute great building projects to biblical personalities, perhaps showing that the present cannot compete with the past. Antioch is the city that Antiochus built, Okbara and Ezekiel's sepulchre were built by king Jechoniah.²⁰¹ At Gubail "is an altar...before which the Ammonites used to sacrifice and burn incense."²⁰² However he does give an unnamed Caesar credit for having built Caesarea on the site of the Biblical Gath. He also admires Alexander the Great's work in building and planning the city of Alexandria.

Meshullam of Volterra (1481) is amazed to find anything at all to remind him of ancient Jerusalem. He thinks it worth mentioning that

²⁰⁰ Adler, p.181, Eisenstein, p.97.

²⁰¹ any idea what Jechoniah may have built?

²⁰² Signer, p.77, Eisenstein, pp.24-25.

there are still olives growing on the Mount of Olives.²⁰³ But when he encounters something truly unusual, he gives it biblical context. For example, he believes that the crocodiles in the Nile were the frogs which plagued the Pharaoh of the exodus.

Jacob the emissary of Rabbi Yechiel of Paris (1238-44) struggles, like some of the Christian pilgrims, with the placement of Jerusalem. He says that David's tower is "now within Jerusalem...To-day Jerusalem lies to the north-west of the Temple Mount, not as it used to be, on the south of the Temple Mount as it is said [Ezekiel 40:2] 'The frame of a city on the South,' and in Psalms [48:3] 'Mount Zion on the sides of the north,' and the cave of Zedekiah is there."²⁰⁴ Like some Christian pilgrims, Jacob deals with the conflict between where he expected to see Jerusalem and where it actually is by arguing that the city must have moved. It would never occur to him to question the validity of his sources. The Bible must be right, so something must have happened between the time it describes and the actual Jerusalem that Jacob saw. Sacred text and visual inspection are both valid; inconsistencies between the two must be explained by human behavior.

All medieval religious accounts are located in a triangle formed by what the sacred texts teach, what the travelers see, and how the

²⁰³ Adler, p.196, Eisenstein, p.102.

²⁰⁴ Adler, pp.118-119, Eisenstein, p.67.

sights are translated into words. Medieval religious travelers understood and communicated a textualized reality to a literate audience. Though pilgrims allowed books to compete with empirical evidence, they were willing to rely on their own critical thinking and to share the process with their readers. The very fact of travel means that place has a validity outside the text, and these pilgrims are interested in finding it.

CHAPTER 4 - ALIENATION

Finding the Other

The high rates of Christian pilgrimage and the explosion in pilgrimage literature from the eleventh to fifteenth century reflect, in some sense, the self-perception of the medieval European Christian, who saw himself as a wanderer in this world, a "pilgrim toward a divine order."¹ Travel was a physical manifestation of this world view, a recognition that even in an age when nations were emerging all through Europe, the individual was defined by more than just his birthplace.

A similar school of thought existed in the Islamic world as well. A *hadith* enjoined the Muslim to "Be in this world as if you were a stranger or a traverser of the road," but the fact is that within the large Muslim empire of the Middle Ages, a Muslim could travel great distances - sometimes even from India to Spain - without taking on the legal status of a foreigner. His emotional condition, however, might make him feel out of place almost immediately. Various literary sources of the medieval Islamic world attest to the stranger's feelings of loneliness and the desirability of making him feel at home.² Ibn Battuta, for example,

¹ Gerhard B. Ladner, "*Homo Viator*: Medieval Ideas on Alienation and Order," *Speculum* 42,2 (1967) pp. 233-257.

² Rosenthal, pp.35-75.

was so homesick that he wept at the very first large city he came to after leaving home. Over time, mysticism and piety contributed to a new conception (more like the one of medieval Europe) that everyone is a stranger in this world, and so, in the larger scheme, no one is a stranger. Sufi mystics, some of whom wandered on principle from place to place, employed the Neoplatonic notion of the soul as stranger in this world. "But how widely this feeling spread in society, cannot be accurately measured."³

The sense of territoriality is much more difficult to trace among European Jews. Clearly, place was an important factor in the self-perception of the Jews of medieval Europe. Local customs could take on the force of religious law, and, like Muslims and Christians, Jews often referred to themselves by birthplace. But the background noise of established communities was travel, usually for trade. Further, a group that did not have political control over any territory might well feel disconnected from the land it inhabited in diaspora. Possibly, the Crusades intensified Jewish attachment to the Land of Israel as the violence of the Crusaders left Jews in doubt about their safety in France and Germany. In the thirteenth century, the very fact that Muslims and Christians were having trouble retaining control over Jerusalem was used by Jews as proof that the city was truly theirs.

³ Rosenthal, p.73.

This is not to suggest that the Jews of medieval Europe felt utterly rootless in Europe. Their histories show that they created myths of origin that emphasized how long they had lived in Europe. In Spain, for example, the dominant legend in the tenth century was that the Jews of Spain were descendants of the tribe of Judah, exiled after the destruction of the first temple in 516 BCE. According to a twelfth-century source that remained a staple of Jewish historical writing, the community of Spain grew to greatness after two shipwrecked rabbis were captured and sold at Cordoba in the tenth century.⁴

Similarly, some German Jews suggested that their ancestors had first reached the country as captives of war. Both Spanish and German Jews circulated self-protective stories about their local rabbis warning the Jews of Jerusalem not to crucify Jesus. Not only did these stories remove the Jews of Europe from all responsibility for the crucifixion, they also emphasized the antiquity of the Jewish settlement. Most likely, Jews migrated (willingly or unwillingly) into Roman territories in the second and third centuries, and the communities grew slowly over a long period.

⁴ Gerson D. Cohen, A Critical edition with a translation and notes of the *Book of Tradition* by Abraham ben David, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1967, pp.63-67. For the Jews of Germany, see Gay, p.4.

Of course, all myths of origin come from the central reality that the Jews of Europe did come from someplace else. They were inescapably transplanted exiles, always looking back east to a pristine beginning.

If the individual felt himself rootless (and perhaps the Jews felt this communally, as exiles), he still recognized that he had a defined place in the scheme of things, and he tried to order the world around him. The strategies which people used to understand the world at large generated structures for categorizing other people. Not surprisingly, medieval writers took constructs that had been used to understand their own world, and applied them to understanding other worlds. In Christian Europe of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a popular method of organizing information was categorizing things in groups of three. This "triangularity", as it has become known, was one of the major intellectual themes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁵ The triangle was generally made up of a thing, its opposite, and a "neutral zone" on which the two could act. Naturally enough, this construct spilled over as a method for understanding the world outside Christian Europe and was generated by pilgrims in their writings. One medieval Christian European tripartite view saw the world as a triangle of the Holy Land, Christianity, and Muslim unbelievers. In this triangle, Christians and

Muslims fight over, and in, the Holy Land. (The construct applied in other situations as well. For example, the Mongols could represent the battlefield between Muslims and Christians, with the legendary Prester John as Christian character.)

Islam itself was seen in the Christian scholarly literature of the twelfth century and onwards as "a religion of sexual license which gained adherents by violence and the sword...In short, the distorted image of Islam was basically a negative image of Christendom, that is, an image of what Christians wanted to think they were not."⁶

It seems easy enough to find the medieval Muslim's classification of the world- either one was in the *Dar al-Islam* or the *Dar al-Harb*. But a class of people - the *dhimmis* - existed in both the worlds of belief and disbelief. The place of Christians and Jews, "people of the book" is not outside the fold, but rather in the past.⁷ One cannot speak of a triangle, as in the Christian world, but instead of an us/them duality in which the old "us" still appears under the chronological surface.

Medieval Muslim accounts of non-Muslims tend to incorporate some of the geographer's understanding that different climates produce

⁵ Michael Harbsmeier, "On Travel Accounts and Cosmological Strategies: Some Models in Comparative Xenology," *Ethnos* 50, 1 (1985) pp.274-280.

⁶ W. Montgomery Watt, "Cultural Identity in Islam and Christianity," *Osmanli Arastirmari Journal of Ottoman Studies*, vol.7-8, (1980) pp71-82.p.79.

⁷ Harbsmeier, p.290.

different types of characteristics in people.⁸ Medieval Muslim ethnography, to use an anachronism, had three indices of barbarism - filth, funerals, and sexual mores. The less people washed, the less respectful of the corpse and the fewer restrictions on sexual behavior in a given society, the more alien it was.⁹ But alien did not always mean inferior, and the self-confident *adib* was also willing to concede that the people of India and China might be superior to Muslims in some areas.¹⁰

The medieval Jewish view of other religions was probably closer to the Muslim polyculturalism than to the Christian pyramid of the age. The world was made up of Jews and non-Jews, but the non-Jews might be monotheists or pagans, civilized or barbaric. One fuzzy area was Jewish sectarians. Jewish travelers universally present Samaritans and Karaites as being outside the fold, yet they devote far more time and interest to what they consider offshoots of their religion than to Christianity or Islam.

The sense of difference emerges strongly in travel writing. Though others might be represented in art and song, those who wrote about them seem to have held the power to define them. Writers emerge from the elite and can use their writings to spread their

⁸ Harbsmeier, pp.293-294. Jews seem to do this too.

⁹ A. Al-Azmeh, "Barbarians in Arab Eyes," *Past and Present* 134 (1992) pp.3-18.

¹⁰ Al-Azmeh, p.17. This only seems to move east; westerners never have an advantage.

perceptions.¹¹ Travelers have a particular power to express who they are and how they differ from others. The very fact of going from the familiar to the unknown forces the travel writer to distinguish himself from others. Travel writing becomes an extended form of self-definition. In order to define someone as Other, though, the definer needs to be in a position of cultural power, or at least to consider himself as possessing this power. The reader needs to share the assumption of the writer's power to determine who is "us" and who is not, and to accept the mechanism of the "Othering" process - in this case, a travelogue. We have already seen that travel writers (and sometimes their editors) make the effort to establish themselves as reliable sources, capable of standing up to the readers' scrutiny.

Since this study is concerned with "People of the Book" - people whose primary identification is as members of a society which is constructed and defined through adherence to sacred text, it is important to remember that the travelers already have a privileged text which defines Self and Other in its most necessary form. But where the privileged texts are taught and reproduced in limited and authorized ways, the non-privileged text is more accessible. Travel writings are non-privileged texts arrogating the some of the rights of the privileged text. Writers and readers are choosing here to modify, expand and

¹¹ Said also concentrates on the written forms of cultural expression.

extend their understanding of Self and Other. Not surprisingly, they will use their understanding of their holy books as a starting point - but not their only referent - in their constructions of people they meet. The travelers take for granted that they bring with them the ideal practice of their religion. Local deviations tend to be portrayed either as extreme piety or borderline heresy. Sometimes the improper behavior can be attributed to excessive contact with local infidels. But even travelers who are intellectually comfortable with the notion that normative religious practice varies from place to place are not always emotionally satisfied with the resultant diversity.

Our travelers take as basic categories Jew and Gentile, Sunni and Shi'i, orthodox and sectarian, but Other can be constructed in quite different ways and refer to different groups. The traveler constructs the Other by referring primarily to his religious practices, but also by representing his clothing, his speech and occasionally his eating habits. In these accounts the Other is almost never represented in terms of physical appearance.

There can be many Others, simultaneously mirroring or defining different areas in the self-identity of the narrator. That is, Self and Other do not stand apart as two distinct poles but as fluid markers, changing with the needs of the narrator. In describing the Others of the Holy Land, some of the writers find that they too are Other, because now the Other

is not a fixed polarity aligned against the Self but rather a subjective referent. For example, whereas in Christian Europe the Jew could serve as a fixed Other, the experiences of the crusades had, for some travelers, expanded that definition to include a new polarity, one which could be more of a mirror image than Judaism had ever been. In addition to Christian/Jew, the traveler now presents a new polarity - Europe and the *Dar al-Islam*. Judaism might be theologically connected with the birth of Christianity, but Christendom had a better match in "Islamdom" - the *Dar al-Islam*. This was a competing construct, with leaders, laws and territories. The Christian travelers consistently see the *Dar al-Islam* as a temporal entity, albeit divided among different rulers, echoing perhaps the beginnings of a similar conception of Europe.

The political aspect matters. Power often separates the self from the other. A traveler, unable to make or comprehend the rules of the society he visits, is on one level powerless. He faces increased exposure to physical danger. His status is defined for him by others. With this vulnerability, though, comes power. An outsider is free to categorize and label what he sees; in other words, his freedom from local convention gives him the power to reduce a society to an observable object, though not necessarily an "unchanging abstraction."¹²

¹² Said, pp.7-8.

Behind every travel account is the political situation that defines the Self of the writer. Christian travelers go from a world they control to a world they are trying to control but cannot. Jewish travelers travel between worlds that assign them different categories of Other, and Muslims travel mostly in lands under Muslim control, but in which Otherness is defined differently. (i.e. Sunni/Shi'i, Almohad /Abbasid) All of these affect the way in which the writers define and present the people they encounter.

The Crusader historian Jacques De Vitry and others are distressed to see that European Christians do not do more to recover their holy sites, but the threat, as in much Crusade-era preaching, is to Christian land, with an appeal to feudal family obligations, rather than to Christianity as a religion.¹³

In the post-crusade Holy Land, both Eastern and Western Christians are "Others" without territorial control. A Christianity divested of territory, a Christianity without Christendom, creates new openings for the conception of Other as a category rather than as a fixed entity based on theology. This leads to the slipping of the Jew from his fixed position

¹³ Riley-Smith, p.16 points out that the first call to crusade "was expressed in intimate, even domestic, terms...a summons to a vendetta." Also see Riley-Smith, "Crusading as an act of love," *History* 65 (1980) and B. Z. Kedar, Crusade and Mission: European approaches toward the Muslims, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

as permanent Other, so that Ludolph of Suchem, a fourteenth-century German monk, can observe that churches in Muslim Jerusalem fare no better than synagogues in Germany.

For Muslim and Jewish travelers, the Other already existed as a category, so pilgrimage does not change the conception of otherness. But over the course of their voyages, the pilgrims (particularly Jews) do encounter new ways of relating to Others.

Being the Other

Travel writers have a two-pronged relationship with otherness. They experience and define it at the same time. In the course of the journey, they naturally experience personal feelings of loneliness and homesickness. But it is only in isolation from familiar surroundings that they come to appreciate that the new environment has rules and customs of its own. Even before embarking on a trip, they recognize what dislocation will do to them. Felix Fabri, leaving his monastery at Ulm in Germany was nearly overcome by a last-minute case of cold feet. He admits that

a great and almost irresistible temptation assailed me, for the delightful eagerness to see Jerusalem and the holy places, with which I had until that time been glowing, altogether died within me, and I felt a loathing for travel; and the pilgrimage, which had appeared so sweet and virtuous, now seemed wearisome, bitter, useless, empty, and sinful. I was angry with myself for having undertaken it, and all those who had dissuaded me from it I now thought to be the wisest of counselors and the truest of friends; while I considered that those who had encouraged me were enemies of my life. I had more pleasure in beholding Swabia than the land of Canaan, and Ulm appeared to me pleasanter than Jerusalem. Moreover, the fear of the sea increased within me, and I conceived so many objections to that pilgrimage that, had I not been ashamed, I would have run after Master Ludwig and re-entered Ulm with him, and I should have had the greatest delight in doing so. This accursed temptation remained present with me throughout the whole voyage, and was most troublesome to me, because it took away all the delight and joy and zeal wherewith a pilgrim supports his labors and is urged to persist in his work, and caused me to be dull and stupid both in viewing places of note by sea and land, and also in writing accounts of them. What I have written was done against the

grain, but I sometimes succeeded in conquering my dullness by hard work.¹⁴

Fabri, honest and verbose as usual, is unique among the travelers in expressing the depth and the effects of his homesickness. But there is every reason to suspect that others felt as he did. Ibn Jubayr does not mention any difficulties in taking leave of his home in Granada in 1183, but arriving at Baghdad, he is reminded how people love their hometowns.

We had heard that the air of Baghdad engenders gladness in the heart and disposes the spirit to joy and conviviality so that you will scarce find in it one who is not cheerful and gay, even though he be a stranger and far from home. So when we had alighted at this place which is one stage from the city, and had breathed its scented breezes and quenched our burning thirsts from its cool waters, we felt, despite our alien loneliness, the call to happiness, and on our rugged path we sensed joy, the joy of the absent returning. We felt aroused in us the promptings of good cheer, reminding us of the meetings of loved ones in the brightness of youth. If so it is with the stranger absent from his

¹⁴ Fabri, vol.7, pp.8-9

native land, how then shall it be for the pilgrim returning to his kith and home?¹⁵

But once Ibn Jubayr gets closer to the city, he is annoyed by the insincerity of the people and their disdain for strangers. "The stranger with them is without fellowship, his expenses are doubled, and he will find amongst them none who do not practice hypocrisy with him or make merry with him only for some profit or benefit."¹⁶ Disillusioning encounters do not ease the ache of homesickness. Ibn Jubayr writes toward the end of his journey that in Messina there are only a few Muslim craftsmen, "so the Muslim stranger there will feel lonely."¹⁷

Ibn Battuta describes how difficult it was for him to leave his family and how homesick he was at the beginning of his journey. Like Ibn Jubayr, he feels his alienation when arriving at a large city.

So at last we reached the town of Tunis, and the townsfolk came out to welcome the shaikh Abu 'Abdallah al-Zubaidi and to welcome Abu'l-Tayyib, son of the qadi Abu 'Abdallah al-Nafzawi. On all sides they came forward with greetings and questions to one another, but not a soul said a

¹⁵ Broadhurst, p.225, Nassar, p.266.

¹⁶ Broadhurst, p.227, Nassar, p.269.

¹⁷ Broadhurst, p.340, Nassar, p.413.

word of greeting to me, since there was none of them that I knew. I felt so sad at heart on account of my loneliness that I could not restrain the tears that started to my eyes, and wept bitterly. But one of the pilgrims, realizing the cause of my distress, came up to me with a greeting and friendly welcome, and continued to comfort me with friendly talk until I entered the city, where I lodged in the college of the Booksellers.¹⁸

Ibn Juzayy, Ibn Battuta's editor, is moved enough by this account that he adds in a similar story that he heard from someone else.

Because Christian and Jewish travelers, with the exception of the fifteenth-century German monk Felix Fabri, tended to write more concisely and to appear less frequently in their accounts than their Muslim counterparts, one rarely finds feelings of homesickness discussed so openly. Instead, the feeling comes through at the travelers' delight in familiar foods and in meeting people from their own regions. Sometimes the need for something familiar, that is, the personal homesickness, outweighs group religious affiliation. For example, the only individual living Jew to appear in any of the Christian accounts being studied is in the writing of the fourteenth century

¹⁸ As quoted in Dunn, p.37, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, pp19-20. Dunn, p.40 n.11 quotes Robert Brunschvig, "Quelques remarques historiques sur les

German priest, Ludolph von Suchem. Ludolph writes about a mountain in the Galilee graced with a castle and village, both known as Japhet "wherein in my time a Jew from Westphalia dwelt with his wife."¹⁹ Why and how did Ludolph get this piece of information? It seems more likely that he was looking for transplanted Germans than for Jews, but his sense of local identity seems to overcome religious solidarity. We do not know if Ludolph actually met the Jew. It is even possible that the Jew acted as his interpreter or tour guide.

German Jews apparently settled throughout the Land of Israel. Isaac Chelo was from Aragon, not Germany, but during his travels in the 1330s he finds a Jew at Shiloh whom he categorizes by European nation as well as by scholarly specialization. "An old man, a Kabbalist, lives near this monument. He is a German, and lives by making copies of sacred books..."²⁰ Actually, whenever Chelo meets European Jews, he mentions their country of origin, so that he also claims that there is a relatively large population of Jews in Jerusalem, many of whom are of French descent, engaged in different professions and living comfortably

medersas de Tunisie," *Revue Tunisienne* 6 (1931) pp.261-285.

¹⁹ Ludolph, p.128.

²⁰ Adler, p.141, Eisenstein, p.75.

under just rule.²¹ He reports similarly that Acre “holds many learned foreigners and pious rabbis from France and Germany.”²²

About a hundred and fifty years later, the Italian Meshullam of Volterra took sick while in Jerusalem and was delighted to be cared for by Jews who prepared him “food after our custom.”²³

For the most part, Meshullam finds that Jews in the *Dar al-Islam* comport themselves in many ways like the Muslim majority. The Jews of Alexandria “do like the Ishmaelites in all the lands and provinces of the Sultan. They have neither bed nor table nor chair nor lamp, but they eat, drink and sleep on the ground always, and all their work is on the ground.”²⁴ He does not describe the Jews separately but instead adds this to a long description of Muslim behavior in Alexandria. He presents the strangeness as being geographically specific and relating to all the people in the place. He does point out some specifically Jewish behaviors, such as that - presumably in compliance with the sumptuary legislation of the Pact of 'Umar - the “Jews wear a yellow turban on their heads throughout the provinces of the sultan’s realm.”²⁵

²¹ Adler, p.133, Eisenstein, p.72.

²² Adler, p.144, Eisenstein, p.76.

²³ Adler, p.195, Eisenstein, p.101.

²⁴ Adler, p.159, Eisenstein, p.89.

²⁵ Adler, p.163, Eisenstein, p.90.

Sometimes Meshullam is able to establish real rapport with other Jews. He was invited, together with the Nagid of Egypt, (R. Solomon b.R.Joseph) to the house of a Jew in Rosetta who was hosting a merchant who had once been a guest in the house of Meshullam's father. Word then spread that Meshullam came from a rich and respected home, and so he was treated well for the rest of his trip.

But travelers are aware of their status as different and alone. The well-known rabbi Obadia Bertinoro (traveling in 1487-90) writes to his father about his own reception at Alexandria. Bertinoro is hosted by Moses Grasso, dragoman to the Venetians. "He came to meet us and released us from the hands of the Arabs who sit in the gate and plunder foreign Jews at their pleasure. He took me in his house, and there I had to remain while I stayed in Alexandria. I read with him in a book on the Cabbala, which he had in his possession, for he dearly loved this science. By thus reading with him I found favor in his sight and we became friends."²⁶ Bertinoro does not have the advantage of family connections, but he can connect with his host through learning.

Ibn Jubayr is able to take comfort in his fellow travelers as well as transplanted Andalusians. He describes Qus as a meeting spot for tourists, pilgrims and travelers, all doing what he's doing. "It is a place which all may come upon, a place of alighting for the traveler, a

²⁶ Adler, p.220, Eisenstein, p.111.

gathering place for companies of wayfarers, and a meeting-place for pilgrims from the Maghrib, from Misr, from Alexandria and from adjoining lands."²⁷ Apparently he looks for fellow Andalusians wherever he goes, and when he meets a jurist from Seville he mentions him by name.²⁸ Ibn Jubayr also took advantage of Maliki hospitality in Damascus. "The conveniences of this venerated mosque for strangers and students are indeed many and wide."²⁹

Samuel bar Samson records the following conversation at the tomb of the Patriarchs at Hebron. The head of the party had permission to enter but the rest of the Jews accompanying him did not. So the leader of the group went in by "the sealed permit of the King, who by the mistaken law of Muhammad is the Caliph. He entered alone, and we ourselves did not dare to follow him. We betook ourselves to the dyer - Rabbi Saadiah, Rabbi Tobiah, and myself - and we said to him: We are travelers from a far country, come hither to pray in this place, and to prostrate ourselves where our fathers once trod. The man answered as: Stay here until tomorrow then, with God's help, you shall enter in. We stayed. And he went his way with his companions. In the middle of the night the gatekeeper came for us and we entered."³⁰ The Jew who

²⁷ Broadhurst, pp.57-58, Nassar, p.68.

²⁸ Broadhurst, p.283, Nassar, p.342.

²⁹ Broadhurst, p.283, Nassar, p.341.

³⁰ Adler, p.105, Eisenstein, p.63.

helped Samuel and his friends see the holy sites, as well as the gatekeeper, are referred to not only by name but also by their professions.

The travelers were acutely aware of their vulnerability. Meshullam of Volterra took another trip (presumably on business) after the one he wrote about, and on this journey he crossed paths with Bertinoro. So Ovadia de Bertinoro, traveling on the same boat as Meshullam, witnesses an incident that leaves them both feeling vulnerable. They are vulnerable because they are travelers without the status and legal position they would have had at home, but this particular incident has strains of class resentment and antisemitism. According to Bertinoro, a sailor insulted Meshullam of Volterra. When the merchant complained, the captain of the ship had the sailor flogged and forced him to apologize. "The whole ship's crew were very much annoyed that all this should have happened on account of a few abusive words spoken against a Jew, and from this time they began to hate us and no longer treated us as they had done before. The worthy merchant, Meshullam, took advantage of a small ship that was coming from Rhodes and going to Chios to leave our vessel..."³¹

Meshullam tended to attract danger. We have already heard that he was almost ambushed and killed by his guide in the woods near

³¹ Adler, pp.215-16, Eisenstein, p.110.

Hebron. This story on board ship is less dramatic but shows the constant dangers of travel. Real physical danger was a concern to all travelers and certainly concerned them along the journey. The Knights Templar got their start as a military order by acting as security guards for Christian pilgrims. In the words of the German Theoderich, both the Templars and Hospitallers would "escort pilgrims who are going to the Jordan, and to watch that they are not injured by the Saracens either in going or returning, or while passing the night there."³² But robbers and wild animals were not the everyday annoyance that bureaucracy could be.

Meshullam was ambushed on the back roads, not the highway, and chances are that he risked going off the beaten track because he was trying to avoid customs duties. Because we are studying so many travelers going through many regions under different regimes, there is no one description that covers all the tolls, taxes, customs and searches they faced. But for all of them, the moment of being tangled in the administrative web of a foreign country highlighted their feelings of isolation and alienation. One might even say that otherness makes itself felt in the world of action through the stops and searches that these travelers faced.

³² Theoderich, 5, p.46.

Delays and alienation existed even for Muslims traveling within the *Dar al-Islam*. The religious entity had been politically subdivided early in its history, so borders were not a novelty in the twelfth century. Still, it is one thing to anticipate a customs-house; to experience it is something else entirely.

Ibn Jubayr was positively incensed by the customs duties at Alexandria. Muslims were compelled to pay the *zakat*, the alms tax, on personal provisions and items they had owned for less than a year, even though these were legally tax-exempt.³³ The taxes faced by the non-Muslim passengers who had traveled with Ibn Jubayr on the Genoese ship were of no interest to him. But Ibn Jubayr vividly describes the treatment of the Muslim passengers.

The Muslims were then ordered to take their belongings, and what remained of their provisions, [some of which had already been seized in payment of taxes] to the shore, where there were attendants responsible for them and for carrying to the Customs all that they had brought ashore. There they were called one by one, and the possessions of each were produced. The Customs was packed to choking. All their goods, great and small, were searched and confusedly thrown

³³ Cite EI article or book on taxation

together, while hands were thrust into their waistbands in search of what might be within. The owners were then put to oath that they had aught else not discovered. During all this, because of the confusion of hands and the excessive throng, many possessions disappeared.³⁴

Ibn Jubayr blames this situation on the individual customs agents, and not on the ruler, Saladin. In fact, Ibn Jubayr is sure that if Saladin knew of this harassment, he would end it. Further, Ibn Jubayr asserts that in all of Saladin's realm, "we found nothing bad that merits mention save this affair, which was provoked by the officials of the Customs."³⁵ In other words, the alienation is a function of bureaucracy, not the splintering of the Islamic world.

But Ibn Battuta does blame the powers that be. His first negative travel experience comes over a financial matter. A merchant with whom Ibn Battuta had been traveling died and left a substantial sum of money (3000 gold dinars) in the care of a friend. When the Almohad governor of the region heard about this, he seized the money. "This was the first example that I witnessed of the tyranny of the agents and governors of the Muwahhids."³⁶

³⁴ Broadhurst, pp.31-32, Nassar, p.30.

³⁵ Broadhurst, p.32, Nassar, p.30.

³⁶ Gibb, vol.1 p.11, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.17.

Ibn Jubayr is a proud Almohad and manages to turn Christian discrimination against his countrymen into a positive experience. Near Crusader Acre, the Maghribis are taxed more than other Muslims, in retaliation for having joined with Nur-al-Din in war against them. Ibn Jubayr explains the policy. "The Franks declared: 'These Maghribis came and went in our country and we treated them well and took nothing from them. But when they interfered in the war, joining with their brother Muslims against us, we were compelled to place this tax upon them.' In payment of this tax, the Maghribis are pleasingly reminded of their vexing of the enemy, and thus the payment of it is lightened and its harshness made tolerable."³⁷

No such feelings about customs duties and administrative delays existed among Christian travelers, especially those traveling after the Crusaders had been defeated and evicted from the Holy Land. The administrative difficulties for Christian pilgrims traveling in the Islamic world were a painful reminder of the reduced power of Christendom in the region. Felix Fabri, docking at Jaffa at the end of the fifteenth century, immediately has to come to terms with traveling into hostile territory. The boat drops anchor outside the harbor because the travelers have no safe-conduct pass. Then they signal their peaceful intentions by lowering sails and banners. Fabri is indignant

³⁷ Broadhurst, p.316, Nassar, p.382.

that "like timid, humble tributaries of the Lord Soldan, needing his safe-conduct, like captives and slaves of the Moors and Saracens, we lay off the towers of Joppa awaiting their good pleasure."³⁸ But he was aware that part of the problem lay in the fact that two boats full of Christian pilgrims had arrived at the harbor at once.

Naturally, the post-crusade Christian pilgrims' entire experience on land took place under the eyes of Muslim rulers. The author of the *City of Jerusalem*, writing in about 1220, explains how some pilgrims accommodated themselves to Muslim rule.

Here the Saracens led the Christians into the city, so that they could go covertly to the Sepulchre. For the Saracens did not wish that the Christians should see the business of the city; wherefore they admitted them by the Gate which is in the street of the Holy Sepulchre, but would not admit them by the Master Gate. (But understand well, that of the Christian pilgrims who wished to do to the Sepulchre and the other Holy Places the Saracens exacted great bargains, gifts, and services. The Saracens charged them each for thirty bezants. But they afterwards excommunicated all the Christians who gave

³⁸ Fabri, vol.7, p. 212.

hire-money, service, bargains, and ransoms
in order to visit the sacred places; wherefore
the Saracens did not receive so much as
they were wont.)³⁹

Admiring the Other

However, even Christian travelers to the Muslim Holy Land have good things to say about the rule of law in general and the way administration works for the Muslim population. Some travelers try to understand the administrative structure of the Muslim world. Ludolph compares the caliph's role to the pope's. "In this city used to dwell the Caliph, that is, the successor of Mahomet, to whom the Saracens render obedience in all things, even as do the Christians to the Pope, the successor of St. Peter."⁴⁰ Benjamin of Tudela gives roughly the same description and also compares the roles of pope and caliph.

Before giving the Biblical history of Ramatha, Ludolph characterizes it as the home of "the Cadi- that is, the Bishop of the Saracens - and here we once had much trouble about some Christians who had been taken prisoners there through their own folly, before we

³⁹ City of Jerusalem, p.17.

⁴⁰ Ludolph, p.73

set them free."⁴¹ He assumes that the Muslim legal system is fair and internally consistent, and actually blames Christians for getting themselves into trouble. In general, the travelers seem to respect the fact that this hostile government manages to maintain internal peace and order.

In Damascus, Ludolph comments on the safety of the marketplace. "Though the city is so full of people, and though all the merchandise is left almost unguarded, yet there is no man so old that he can remember anyone to have been slain there, and it is very seldom that any of the goods for sale are stolen."⁴²

Even Meshullam of Volterra, an Italian Jew with no great love of tax-collecting governments, manages to get fair treatment in an Egyptian court. "It happened to us that we hired a boat...up to Misr, and a deed was drawn up by an Ishmaelite scribe, for if you do not do this when you arrive they will seek twice double pay and will deny the bargain that you made with them."⁴³ He speaks from experience. Meshullam and his travel companions had reached an agreement with the owner of a boat who loaded their belongings on board his boat and then demanded more payment. They all went to the qadi and the emir, at which point the boat-owner's testimony was found false and he was

⁴¹ Ludolph, pp.121-22.

⁴² Ludolph, p.130.

ordered to return the property or accept the agreed-upon payment. He extorted them again, but this time for less. Similarly when Meshullam was en route from Hebron to Jerusalem, his guide planned to rob and kill him and his travel companions, but two mamluks persuaded the would-be robbers that the "Niepo of Hebron" (?) would hold the wrongdoers responsible. As mentioned, Meshullam seems to have taken the unsafe back route to avoid the many tolls from Hebron to Jerusalem.

Meshullam is quite impressed by how well-built and well-maintained Cairo is, claiming that more than 10,000 men work sprinkling the ground with water to prevent dust from rising. The accessibility of the Sultan is worth mentioning. "anyone who wishes to see the Sultan can see him easily. He has a fine large fort in the city, and his dragomans at his side, and mamelukes all round, more than three hundred to protect him. If anybody wishes to complain of any violence or theft done to him he can then complain, and this is the reason why the nobles of the land take care to do nothing improper."⁴⁴

Not only is there law and order, but a certain code of honor prevails as well. Ludolph is amazed that the graves of "those right glorious princes"⁴⁵ the crusaders Godfrey and Baldwin are in places of honor. "It is a great wonder that the Saracens suffer their sepulchers

⁴³ Adler, p.165, Eisenstein, p.91.

⁴⁴ Adler, p.170, Eisenstein, p.93.

and their bodies to rest undisturbed in such honor, seeing how much harm they did them, and how they even took away from them the whole of the Holy Land; for in Lombardy, when Christians quarrel, they cast one another's rotten corpses to the dogs."⁴⁶

Burchard describes the chivalry of Bedouin, whom he calls "Midianites". "Moreover, there are in the Holy Land Midianites, who now are called Bedouins and Turcomans, who apply themselves solely to feeding flocks and camels, of which they have exceeding great numbers."⁴⁷ He comments on their bravery and the fact that they do not use arrows "saying that it is base beyond measure to steal away a man's life with an arrow."⁴⁸

These positive observations about well-run administrations exist alongside a recurring complaint of the travelers. Almost everyone complains about taxes. Benjamin of Tudela, among other Jewish travelers, notes the poll tax, the *jizya*, on Jews under Islamic rule. He describes it as obligatory on all males over the age of fifteen.⁴⁹

For sheer anti-tax feeling, no one outdoes Meshullam of Volterra (1481) The Italian is extraordinarily inconvenienced by the customs

⁴⁵ Ludolph, p.103, refers to Baldwin I and Godfrey of Bouillon.

⁴⁶ Ludolph, pp.103-04.

⁴⁷ Burchard, p.105.

⁴⁸ Burchard, p.105.

⁴⁹ Signer, p.110, Eisenstein, p.36. The tax is "*be-kol malkhut Yishmael*"

duties of the Mamluk empire. Though he hides money in his shoes, the Mamluk guards at Alexandria find it, but tax him only on what he owes. "Jews pay nothing for merchandise, but Gentiles pay ten per cent, and it is impossible to avoid the tax because they search everybody even Jews and women."⁵⁰ Leaving Alexandria, he specifies the taxes and troubles. "In Alexandria all the Gentiles pay 13 ducats each on entry to the city and they cannot go out unless they pay it, but the Jews pay nothing, but every Jew must get permission from the Emir when he leaves it to go abroad, and they go in a great caravan...We obtained a permit from the Gran Maestro and the Queen of Cyprus to go to Misr."⁵¹ Though the Sultan appoints people to guard the roads from robbers, these guardians impose higher taxes than they are allowed to. Elsewhere, Meshullam goes so far as to disguise himself as a Muslim who speaks no Arabic in order to avoid taxes. As he explains, "Turks and Ishmaelites have the same faith, and speak a different language, and do not understand each other."⁵²

Variations within the Other

⁵⁰ Adler, p.158, Eisenstein, p.89.

⁵¹ Adler, p.163, Eisenstein, p.90.

⁵² Adler, p.176, Eisenstein, p.95.

To avoid taxes, Meshullam exploits the multi-culturalism of the *Dar al-Islam*. He was able to do this because he paid attention to the society around him. Most of the travelers, despite the fact that they were visiting places for their past significance, do take the time to notice the people and places. Travelers from the western side of the Mediterranean often admired the vegetation, the intellectual life, the hospitals and the chivalry that they encountered along the pilgrimage routes. But not every social interaction was positive. Those travelers who stopped to notice the treatment of women were negative about what they saw. The travelers rarely admire or accept the linguistic skills of the locals.

Here, the discovery of difference does not always make the traveler feel powerless or inferior. Often, the descriptions are neutral observations, and when they are not, the traveler takes the high ground for himself. This is especially true when the locals do not meet up to the religious expectations of the travelers.

Ibn Jubayr is both explicit and strong in his denunciation of rule in the Hijaz, which he considers corrupt and unholy. In a famously chauvinistic passage, he writes, "May God soon correct and purify this place by relieving the Muslims of these destructive schismatics with the swords of the Almohades, the defenders of the Faith...Let it be absolutely certain and without a doubt established that there is no Islam

save in the Maghrib lands. There they follow the clear path that has no separation and the like, such as there are here in these eastern lands of sects and heretical groups...There is no justice, right, or religion in His sight except with the Almohades - may God render them powerful."⁵³

And yet, this condemnation refers only to specific areas. Fundamentally, Ibn Jubayr sees the East, Baghdad and the Hijaz excepted, as spiritually superior to the Maghrib.

Whoever of the young men of the Maghrib seeks prosperity, let him move to these lands and leave his country in the pursuit of knowledge and he will find many forms of help. The first of these is the release of the mind from the consideration of livelihood, and this is the greatest and most important. For when zeal is present the student will find the way clear to exert his utmost endeavour, and there will be no excuse for lagging behind...We speak only to the zealous, who in their own land find that the search for the means of living comes between them and their aim of seeking knowledge. Well then this door of the East is open, so enter it in peace industrious youth and seize the chance of undistracted

⁵³ Broadhurst, p.73, Nassar, p.87.

(study) and seclusion before a wife and children cling to you and you gnash your teeth in regret at the time you have lost.⁵⁴

Not only this, but easterners rejoice at the opportunities for charity.⁵⁵

Both in Damascus and Baghdad, pilgrims are treated with respect .

Ibn Jubayr is willing to give up his own local chauvinism when proven wrong. "Concerning the foods, fruits, and other good things, we had thought that Spain was especially favoured above all regions. So it was until we came to this blessed land and found it overflowing with good things, and fruits such as figs, grapes, pomegranates, quince, peaches, lemons...All these various kinds of vegetable and fruit had an excellence of taste greater than those of other lands, and our surprise at that lasts long."⁵⁶

The same holds true for speakers. After hearing some of the speakers in Baghdad, "we marvelled at their excellence in comparison with the speakers we knew in the west. In Mecca and Medina - may God exalt them - we had attended the meetings of those whom we have mentioned in this journal, but they were poor beside those of this

⁵⁴ Broadhurst, pp.298-99, Nassar, pp.360-61.

⁵⁵ Broadhurst, p.299, Nassar, p.361.

⁵⁶ Broadhurst, p.117, Nassar, p.139.

unrivalled man [Jamal al-Din Abu 'l-Fada'il ibn Ali al-Jawzi]"⁵⁷ A Persian speaker whose bilingual eloquence and quick thinking impressed Ibn Jubayr is described "in the manner of the preachers of these eastern lands."⁵⁸

Ibn Jubayr has no comment on the fact that it is a Christian village (Tell al-'Uqab) which "reminded us of the villages of Andalusia in its beauty and freshness, being surrounded by gardens, vineyards, and all kinds of trees."⁵⁹ A beautiful spring at Ra's al-'Ain prompts Ibn Jubayr to note that "If the villages of eastern Andalusia had such a beautiful site or such sweet springs they would be of the very best."⁶⁰ His touchstone is home. Here, such advantages are wasted. "Our stay in the town had been for refreshment, but in all our journey we had not been so cheated."⁶¹

Ibn Jubayr sees the east as source of the culture in which he lives, but sometimes feels the need to draw even closer connections. Describing the town of Qinnasrin - "One of the towns of Andalusia that resembles it is Jaen, and so it is related that at the time of the conquest of Spain, the people of Qinnasrin settled in Jaen feeling at home in its

⁵⁷ Broadhurst, p.233, Nassar, p.276.

⁵⁸ Broadhurst, p.187, Nassar, p.218.

⁵⁹ Broadhurst, p.251, Nassar, p.302.

⁶⁰ Broadhurst, p.253, Nassar, p.304.

⁶¹ Broadhurst, p.253, Nassar, p.304.

resemblance to their native town and addressing themselves to it...⁶²

The same story of relocation comes up again later.

Sicily impresses Ibn Jubayr with its prosperity. "It is enough to say that it is a daughter of Spain in the extent of its cultivation, in the luxuriance of its harvests, and in its well-being, having an abundance of varied produce, and fruits of every kind and species."⁶³ Around Palermo, the countryside resembles that around Cordova "but this soil is choicer and more fertile."⁶⁴

Ibn Battuta describes on group of others by skin color, clothing, observance, food, and transportation, in that order. In Aydhab live "the Bujah, black-skinned people, who wrap themselves in yellow blankets and ties headbands, each about a fingerbreadth wide, round their heads. They give their daughters no share in their inheritance. Their food is camel's milk and they ride on *mahri* dromedaries, which they call by the name of *suhb*."⁶⁵

Medieval Christian travelers tend to portray Eastern Christians as passive, with a pious clergy, and generally unperturbed about current events, apparently the mirror image of their own experience. The Latin Christian travelers bring with them an expectation of how Christianity

⁶² Broadhurst, p.264, Nassar, p.318.

⁶³ Broadhurst, p.339, Nassar, p.412.

⁶⁴ Broadhurst, p.350, Nassar, p.426.

should be manifested. It should not be a surprise that traveling clergymen look for activism and piety - the traits that motivated their travel - in the residents of the areas they visited.

Jacques De Vitry knows enough of Muslim social/religious practice to recognize that settled Christians have adopted some of it. "They are suspicious and jealous of their wives, whom they lock up in close prison, and guard in such strict and careful custody that even their brethren and nearest relatives can scarce come at them; while they forbid them so utterly to attend churches, processions, the wholesome preaching of God's Word, and other matters appertaining to their salvation, that they scarce suffer them to go to church once a year; howbeit some husbands allow their wives to go out to the bath three times a week."⁶⁶ Substitute "mosque" for "church" and the scene may be a depiction of a Muslim society. The Syrians, he says "shut up their wives after the Saracen fashion, and wrap up both them and their daughters with cloths, that they may not be seen."⁶⁷

Felix Fabri is an especially good observer of the individual. He remembers his guide from the previous trip. He holds Muslims to the same standard to which he holds Christians - that is, he expects them to abide by the rules of their own religion, and he expects them to be

⁶⁵ Gibb, vol.1, p.69, Defrémercy and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.110.

⁶⁶ De Vitry, p.65.

honest. When an armed Mamluk informed Fabri and his fellow-pilgrims that the convent of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai had been destroyed, Fabri cast him as a type disloyal to religion and ethics in general. That is, once he lies to the pilgrims, he has shown himself to be an untrustworthy person. "The aforesaid lying Mameluke, who had spread abroad that news in our galley, sat in the castle with the captain and the others drinking wine, contrary to the law of Mahomet, and became so drunk that he could not get off the galley into the small boat for dizziness, and so the accursed brute remained on board and passed the night with us."⁶⁸ Later on the rumor is exposed as false by a Muslim whom Fabri refers to as "an honest man"⁶⁹ and who has the advantage of speaking some Italian and German.

Fabri is amused that Muslims cannot pronounce his name in Arabic. "My name of Felix causes I know not what difficulty in their language, for both in my former pilgrimage and in this one I was obliged to repeat my name to them several times, and even then they could neither pronounce it or write it without putting some outlandish diphthong before it, and gurgling its syllables in their throats so as not to say 'Felix' but some word which I cannot pronounce in place thereof."⁷⁰

⁶⁷ De Vitry, pp.67-68.

⁶⁸ Fabri, vol.7, p.218.

⁶⁹ Fabri, vol.7, p.228.

⁷⁰ Fabri, vol.7 p.223.

Though he cannot pronounce their rendering of his name, he is not very sympathetic to the fact that these people speak another language. Of some Ethiopians, he remarks that their singing sounded like "howling, barking, and grunting like beast, dogs, and pigs. For all Easterns have most harsh voices; nor can they form any melody, but their singing is like the noise of goats and calves."⁷¹

Burchard dismisses Arabic pronunciations, confident that his pronunciation of place-names is superior to the local Arabic one. "The Saracens corruptly call this place Bothil, not being able to say Bethel."⁷² However, he and others do try to understand place-names given in Arabic, so it seems that he rejects Arabic as a source only when it conflicts with his own Biblical information.

Eastern Christians, different in belief and ritual from the Latin travelers, are, for the most part, portrayed as passive, even childlike, helplessly awaiting European redemption, because they are too effeminate to fight. Their clergy, though, are seen as pious and generous. Many would be willing to submit to the pope, though the travelers do not seem too anxious to have them join the fold. Ludolph, Burchard and Jacques de Vitry pay the most attention to the indigenous Christian populations. Ludolph and Burchard, the Germans, are

⁷¹ Fabri, vol.7, p.234.

⁷² Burchard, p.52.

generally positive if condescending. De Vitry is outright hostile (though he reserves most of his anger for Europeans settled in the Holy Land.)

The only Eastern group Burchard does not like is the Syrians, who "keep no faith with the Latins. They are clothed most wretchedly, and are stingy, giving no alms. They dwell among the Saracens, and for the most part are their servants."⁷³ Burchard seems rather uncharitable here, expecting alms from people who cannot afford to dress well.

European Christians permanently transplanted to the Holy Land are depicted in two ways. The military orders, though sometimes considered too rich, always impress the visitors with their grandeur. Crusaders who have settled down with their families do not get such good press, especially from Jacques de Vitry, a man who came to the Middle East as a crusader functionary. Apparently the Middle East is a place for men in orders, but not for conducting regular family life. De Vitry conceives of the Holy Land as a place to be acted upon, but not lived in. He is the only historian in the group - the pilgrim writers, who also distinguish between pilgrims, Crusaders and settlers, are not nearly as harsh.

In any case, the modern inhabitants of the land are not the "original" ones. This lets the traveler off the hook in many ways, because now the inhabitants do not have to match up to the biblically inspired

expectations of the writers. Theoderich points out that his first problem is that many place names have been changed since Biblical times. "The names and situations of all these cities were in olden days well known to everyone; but the moderns, being strangers in the land, and not its original inhabitants, know only the names of a few places..."⁷⁴ The original inhabitants are "the impious Jews" who were driven out by the Romans.

The modern European inhabitants are always referred to by their country of origin. John of Würzburg is especially vigilant about seeing that Germans get their share of Crusader glory. In the description of the churches is also a section on the German contribution to the Crusaders' taking Jerusalem. John feels that his countrymen's efforts go unappreciated, though he admits that since they "had no intention of remaining there...the glory of delivering the Holy City was ascribed to the Franks alone...Indeed, this province of Christendom would long ago have extended its boundaries beyond the Nile to the southward, and beyond Damascus to the northward, if there were therein as great a number of Germans as there are of others."⁷⁵ As if this were not enough, the Germans do not get their share of endowments. "church, which has been newly built in honor of St. Mary, and which is called the

⁷³ Burchard, p.103.

⁷⁴ Theoderich, p.2.

⁷⁵ Würzburg, p.41.

House of the Germans, upon which hardly any men who speak any other language bestow any benefactions.”⁷⁶ De Vitry also recognizes this solidarity. In describing the origins of the Teutonic knights, de Vitry recognizes that pilgrims like to come and “talk in the language which they knew”⁷⁷ rather than be a part of the majority. We have already seen Jewish travelers establishing relationships with transplanted European Jew and Ibn Jubayr enjoying the company of fellow Andalusis.

Not only was the western side of the Mediterranean home, it was the touchstone for understanding much of what happened in the east. Ludolph sees the fall of Acre as a major milestone (which it was for the Crusaders) for all Christians (which it may or may not have been.) “When the glorious city of Acre thus fell, all the Eastern people sung of its fall in hymns of lamentation, such as they are wont to sing over the tombs of their dead, bewailing the beauty, the grandeur, and the glory of Acre even to this day. Since that day all Christian women, whether gentle or simple, who dwell along the eastern shore (of the Mediterranean) dress in black garments of mourning and woe for the lost grandeur of Acre, even to this day.”⁷⁸ There is something a little paternalistic in the description of Eastern Christians, reactive only,

⁷⁶ Würzburg, p.46.

⁷⁷ De Vitry, 11, p.55.

⁷⁸ Ludolph, p.60.

mourning the fall of the Latins. This echoes Benjamin's description of the mourners of Zion.

Jacques de Vitry goes on to describe and denounce the Jacobites, who are Christians but "have for a long time wandered in lamentable darkness and error."⁷⁹ They circumcise and brand their children, but their main failing seems to be in asserting that Jesus had only a single nature. He has tried to find out what language they speak, only to find that language and religion do not divide along the same lines. "Some of them use the Chaldean alphabet [Syriac], some use the Arabic alphabet, which we call Saracenic. Their laity use divers idioms in their common speech, according to their various nations and provinces, and do not understand the language which their clergy use for Holy Scripture; for though these use the Saracenic alphabet, yet what is written is not the vulgar Saracenic tongue, but a peculiar language understood only by the learned."⁸⁰

De Vitry is obviously aware of some local Muslim practices, for he condemns the Jacobites who "for the most part circumcise their children of both sexes after the fashion of the Saracens."⁸¹

⁷⁹ De Vitry, 11, p.73.

⁸⁰ De Vitry, 11, p.76.

⁸¹ De Vitry, 11, p.73.

But some transplanted Christians have created institutions well worth admiring. John of Würzburg is amazed by the size of the hospital in Jerusalem, which he says can hold over a thousand patients, and credits the Hospitallers for their resources. "it is not every one even of the most powerful kings and despots who could maintain as many people as that house does every day; and no wonder, for, in addition to its possessions in other countries (whose sum total is not easily to be arrived at), the Hospitallers and the Templars have conquered almost all the cities and villages which once belonged to Judaea, and which were destroyed by Vespasian and Titus, together with all their lands and vineyards; for they have troops stationed throughout the entire country, and castles well-fortified against the infidels."⁸² Later on he comes back to the wealth of the Templars and Hospitallers.

De Vitry tells about the formation of the Templars, with an interesting point that gives insight into the noble origins of the knights - one form of discipline was being "condemned to eat scanty meals on the floor without table-linen, until they had made due atonement for their faults, that by this public disgrace they might be made to blush, and the rest to fear."⁸³

⁸² Würzburg, p.22.

⁸³ De Vitry, p.52.

But before the fall of Acre, Christians arrived from many different countries, and Jacques de Vitry has no qualms about stereotyping the nationalities. The French are good naval fighters; the Germans do better on land. The Italians are able to thrive in the Middle East because they ration their food and drink, and keep to a strict code of behavior. Clearly, he does not like the Italians, whom he calls "eager and zealous to further the interests of their own States, grasping and provident for the future, unwilling to serve others" but he knows they are valuable to Crusader life in the east "not only for fighting, but for seafaring, and carrying merchandise, pilgrims, and victuals."⁸⁴ Other nations do not get the same respect from the locals, who, according to the rather tortured reasoning of Jacques de Vitry are called *Pullani* because many of them have Apulian mothers. Despite having these farmers, the community still could not sustain itself, because the enemy of good could not stand to see Christian expansion and well-being. So he brought in the seven deadly sins to afflict the people. They are almost passive pawns in this celestial drama. Lay and religious alike were afflicted by this plague of sinfulness. The main culprits are the native-born children of crusader settlers, who Jacques de Vitry feels inherited none of their fathers' bravery. These *Pullani* "were brought up in luxury, soft and effeminate, more used to baths than battles, addicted to unclean and riotous living,

⁸⁴ De Vitry, p.57.

clad like women in soft robes...A multitude of Saracens would flee from before their fathers, even though they were few; at the voice of their thunder they hasted away; but they feared their cowardly descendants no more than so many women, unless they had some French or other Westerns with them."⁸⁵ Jacques de Vitry was disappointed by the settled crusaders. In describing how the settlers treat their women, he does not ascribe the habits to Muslim influence, though this is clearly the case. Despite the Jews and Christian sectarians, the people who most offend and disappoint Jacques de Vitry are the European crusaders who have turned to sin. He laments the many criminals who crossed the sea and brought their sinfulness with them to the Holy Land. But he does not only condemn those not worthy of coming, but also those who came for unworthy causes.

Generally, he finds that the *Pullani* would rather live in settled accommodation with the Muslims than fight. One cannot count on the Italians because "they more often join battle against one another than against the treacherous infidels, and have more to do with trade and merchandise than with warring for Christ, they whose bold and warlike fathers were greatly dreaded by the infidels now cause them to be of good cheer and fear nought."⁸⁶ Similarly, an anonymous pilgrim finds that the Italians "among themselves they are jealous and quarrelsome,

⁸⁵ De Vitry, p.64.

so that the Saracens are safer with them than they are with one another."⁸⁷

Burchard claims that the worst people in the area are Crusader settlers, because those who went to live there are criminals or fugitives from Europe.⁸⁸ Burchard's transition from the fruits and animals of the Holy Land to human inhabitants is not too charitable. "in short, there are therein all the good things in the world, and the land flows with milk and honey. But they who dwell therein I cannot call brave men; but it contains the worst and basest sort of sinners, so that it is wonderful that the land should endure them."⁸⁹

Naturally, Latin Christians are assumed to be European. Ludolph tells of meeting up with one unfortunate crew of rootless people. This "large and noble" tribe⁹⁰ mans a castle "but where their parents were born before the recovery of the Holy Land no man knows, and I have often been asked by them whether there were any people in my country who said that they had relations in those parts, or who bore their arms on their shields."⁹¹ This testifies to an extraordinary sense of dislocation - on the one hand, these people have completely lost contact with the

⁸⁶ De Vitry, p.67.

⁸⁷ Guidebook, p.29.

⁸⁸ Burchard, p.103.

⁸⁹ Burchard, p.102.

⁹⁰ Ludolph, p.126.

mother country. Their parents did not even pass on the name of their home country. On the other hand, they look overseas for roots, and use the European coat of arms to identify themselves - though by now the symbols must be completely meaningless, the totality of it, the crest, identifies them as having some kind of past.

More often than not, the travelers get emotional in describing peoples' present-day commitment to the land. Burchard is very disappointed in contemporary Christian lack of enthusiasm for Jerusalem. "Well may we groan over the lukewarmness of the Christian people of our time, who, having so many and such great examples before their eyes, hesitate to snatch away from the enemy that land which Jesus Christ hallowed with his blood..⁹² Burchard shows some emotion that Christians do not control the land. One region "abounds in all the good things in the world, so that I do not think I have ever seen better land, if only our demerits and sins did not prevent its being cultivated by Christians."⁹³

Though events happen in the Holy Land, Ludolph presents them through the prism of European social strata and history. Though Ludolph praise the lavish decor of the houses in Acre, he says nothing about sanitation, presumably because it followed a European model, not

⁹¹ Burchard, p.126.

⁹² Burchard, p.3.

that of Alexandria. His attitude to the population is deferential as he writes that "all the dwellers in the city, like the Normans of old, held themselves to be noble, and bore themselves like nobles, as of a truth they were."⁹⁴ He names the dignitaries who lived there and how they dressed and held jousts and games near their castles. Among the rich merchants were the "Pisans, Genoese and Lombards, by whose accursed quarrels the city was lost, for they also bore themselves like nobles."⁹⁵ Apparently this privilege was not to be extended to everyone.

All through the Greek islands, Europeans have made their mark, according to Ludolph. In Morea "there dwell brethren of the house of the Germans, who have there exceeding strong castles, and are ever at variance with the Duke of Athens and the Greeks."⁹⁶ He has turned the Teutonic presence in Greece into a source of feudal disagreement.

In Nicosia, capital of Cyprus, Ludolph reports, the people are so rich that "one who has a revenue of three thousand florins is thought less of there than a man who had a revenue of three marks would be in these parts. But they spend it all in hunting."⁹⁷ He goes on to say that

⁹³ Burchard, p.46.

⁹⁴ Ludolph, p.51.

⁹⁵ Ludolph, p.53.

⁹⁶ Ludolph, p.29. After the Latins took Constantinople in 1204, Athens and the surrounding regions became a duchy. The Princes of Morea ruled from 1205 to 1430.

⁹⁷ Ludolph, p.43.

these rich nobles, who once “used to dwell on the mainland, in the cities of Syria and Judaea, and in the noble city of Acre” now keep a servant for every pair of hunting dogs, and a staff of falconers. Note the view of the Holy Land as the mainland, with Cyprus as the periphery.⁹⁸ There is probably some criticism in the statement, “I have known many nobles and knights in Cyprus who could have kept and maintained two hundred armed men for less than they paid their huntsmen and falconers.”⁹⁹

Ludolph moves the wealth of the east with the observation that since the fall of Acre, “all the glory of the Holy Land, of its kings, princes, and other lords, has been carried over into Cyprus, as you have already heard.”¹⁰⁰

Occasionally a Muslim ruler is mentioned by name, such as “Noradin, the despot of Aleppo”¹⁰¹. Saladin (1169-93) merits a long description by Jacques de Vitry, not just for his fighting skills but for his personality. De Vitry describes him as “of a wise disposition, well skilled in arms and war, long-sighted and prompt in action. He was very generous and open-handed, not only to his own people, but also to

⁹⁸ Ludolph, p.43.

⁹⁹ Ludolph, p.43.

¹⁰⁰ Ludolph, p.61.

¹⁰¹ Theoderich, p.64. Nur al-Din reigned 1146?-74.

some of ours, whom he attracted to his side by presents and promises."¹⁰²

Sects, or variations within the Self - Samaritans, Shi'ites, Assassins and Eastern Christians

Travel brings the writers into contact with people who are somewhat like them and yet different. Most accounts deal with sects within the writers' own religions. Though the orthodoxy of the writers and the rightness of their beliefs never come into question, occasionally one sees appreciation of sectarian behavior. For example, Ludolph retells without comment the fact that Muslims do not allow Christians to enter the temple area. "This came to pass in my time, for some Greeks got in and trampled upon the Saracens' books. As they refused to renounce their faith, they were cut in two."¹⁰³ One does not have to go as far as martyrdom to gain the respect of European travelers. John Poloner describes "a beauteous church belonging to the Greeks."¹⁰⁴ He admires the devotion he sees in the Armenian church. "Indeed, in my time one hundred and twenty lamps used to burn in this church in one

¹⁰² De Vitry, p.94.

¹⁰³ Ludolph, p.98.

¹⁰⁴ Poloner, p.18.

chandelier, and I never saw or heard of such great devotion in the people.”¹⁰⁵

Burchard finds the Eastern Christians of Armenia “exceeding devout”¹⁰⁶ and is deeply impressed by the piety of the king and his court. The princes assemble to hear the Scripture read and explained, and have a sort of Bible study group, asking questions about the text. Though the singing of the priests is “a most holy thing to see and hear”¹⁰⁷ it is the general piety in the air that is most noteworthy to Burchard. “Both clergy and laity are very devout in church, and never do anything there but pray or sing or do whatever else ought to be done there.” Burchard must be aware that some people may be skeptical about these other Christians and writes that “they are men of simple and devout life; yet I do not deny that there may be fools among them, seeing that even the Church of Rome itself is not free from fools.”¹⁰⁸ Burchard must have had quite a sharp tongue.

Despite the apparent presence of some fools, the Greek Church in Armenia was in very good hands, according to Burchard. The “Catholicus” of the Georgians and Armenians, with whom Burchard stayed for two weeks, impressed him greatly with his ascetic practices

¹⁰⁵ Poloner, p.15.

¹⁰⁶ Burchard, p.104.

¹⁰⁷ Burchard, p.111.

¹⁰⁸ Burchard, p107.

(taking only bread and water during Lent and wearing humble clothes) and his temporal power. The religious leader "had exceeding strong castles and great revenues, and was rich beyond any man's counting...I have seen the King of Armenia and Cilicia with all his nobles sitting humbly and with the greatest reverence at his feet..."¹⁰⁹

Ludolph von Suchem also lets his readers see piety among Christians who are not subservient to Rome. "in the Egyptian deserts there stand at this day so many cells and hermitages of holy father, that in some places, I believe, for two or three (German) miles there is one at every bow-shot."

Ludolph passes places in the desert mentioned in Exodus, stopping at a monastery on the site of the burning bush. Here live about 400 monks whose lives are "most devout, strict, and chaste."¹¹⁰ He is clearly contrasting them to German monks when he describes how these hard-working monks live. "They rarely drink wine save on especial fast-days, never eat flesh, but feed on salads, vegetables, beans, dates, and the like, with water, vinegar, and salt, in one refectory without table-furniture."¹¹¹ Ludolph is amazed at how well the monks cope in their austere surroundings and he clearly appreciates "the costly

¹⁰⁹ Burchard, p.108.

¹¹⁰ Ludolph, p.85.

¹¹¹ Ludolph, p.85.

hospitality which they so liberally and kindly bestow upon pilgrims."¹¹² In fact, he believes that the monks are entitled to freedom from pests because "they do not serve the pilgrims for money or out of greed"¹¹³, even offering them free food to take with them when they leave. Ludolph is amazed at how well they manage in their difficult physical surroundings. "They have even, I believe, obtained an especial grace, whereby certain unclean creatures, such as flies, hornets, fleas, and the like, cannot live there, or enter the walls of the convent."¹¹⁴

Ludolph is impressed with other Eastern Christians as well. He approves of the fact that "in the lands beyond the sea the Feast of the Lord's Transfiguration is very solemnly kept...celebrated with new wine."¹¹⁵

Despite having some positive things to say, the writers generally use the experience of sectarianism as a foil for their own belief system. They rarely discuss theology as such, focusing instead on social and relatively minor ritual differences.

For example, the author of the City of Jerusalem says that he is not interested in non-Latin Christians in Jerusalem, but does point out

¹¹² Ludolph, p.85.

¹¹³ Ludolph, p.87.

¹¹⁴ Ludolph, p.87.

¹¹⁵ Ludolph, p.126.

that most of the Syrian population lives in the streets called 'Jewry.'¹¹⁶

By giving only this information about them, the author connects these sectarians to the Jew - the Other of European Christians, and reinforces the otherness of these sectarians.

Usually differences emerge in behavior rather than in place of residence. Ibn Battuta, like Ibn Jubayr, comments on the funeral rites in Damascus, but is less critical than the earlier traveler, perhaps because he has the additional (more exotic, one might say) experience of funerals in India, which he describes out of order, right after the Damascene ones. There, the family and religious figures gather at the grave site three days after the burial for Qur'an reading and sweet drinks. Ibn Battuta mentions that they drink betel and offer it to guests.¹¹⁷

Ibn Battuta's attitude to Shi'ism, especially Nusayri Shi'ism, is, as might be expected, hostile. The tomb of Umar II (r.717-720) has no mosque because "it happens to be in the district inhabited by a sect of Rafidis, abominable persons who hate the Ten Companions (God be pleased with them and curse those who hate them); they hate also every one whose name is 'Omar, especially 'Omar b. 'Abd al-Aziz (God be pleased with him) on account of his action in regard to the veneration

¹¹⁶ City of Jerusalem, p.25.

¹¹⁷ Gibb vol.1, p.154, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, pp.245-246.

of 'Ali (God be pleased with him)."¹¹⁸ Umar had forbidden the Umayyad practice of ceremonially cursing 'Ali from the pulpit.

Ibn Battuta occasionally mentions theology when he thinks that a sect has gotten out of hand. "The majority of the people of these coasts compose the sect of the Nusayriya, who hold the belief that 'Ali ibn Abi Talib is a god. They do not pray [the ritual prayers], nor do they purify themselves [i.e. practice circumcision] nor fast."¹¹⁹ They built mosques because they were compelled to by Baybars, but they do not use them, except occasionally as barns. Ibn Battuta seems to have tried to interfere in their habits. "Frequently too a stranger on coming to a village of theirs will stop at the mosque and recite the call to prayer, and then they call out to him, 'Stop braying; your fodder is coming to you.' The number of these people is considerable."¹²⁰

Jacques de Vitry counts many different groups of non-Latin Christians and looks at the ritual distinctions among them. The Armenians of Antioch "are separated and differ from every Christian nation, having peculiar rites and strange customs of their own...They have a language of their own, and an alphabet, and read Holy Scripture in the vulgar tongue, so that their priests and clergy can be understood in their churches by the laity, as we have said is the case with the

¹¹⁸ Gibb vol.1, p.93, Defémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1,p.145.

¹¹⁹ Gibb vol.1, p.111, Defémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, pp.176-77.

Greeks."¹²¹ However, the Armenians and Greeks hate each other. Jacques de Vitry argues at length that their practice of using unmixed wine for the sacrament is acceptable on historical and theological grounds.

Perhaps the only thing worse than belonging to a misguided church is trying to belong to more than one at a time. Felix Fabri does not know what to make of a priest who officiates in both the Eastern and Western churches. "This displeased me much, and I held that priest to be a heretic of the worst kind, leading the people astray hither and thither: for the two rites cannot be performed by one and the same person; nay, hardly in the same city, because of their disagreement in many important articles."¹²²

Naturally, some of the Christian travelers comment on the differences between the Greek and Latin rites. But the social differences loom large as well. Despite the beauty and devotion of the Greek churches, a particularly glaring flaw of the locals is their perceived cowardice and inability to effect military change. For example, the English Saewulf portrays Greek monks as utterly helpless, tossed about by current events. In the monastery of St. Sabas "are more than three hundred Greek monks now living in community, and serving our God

¹²⁰ Gibb vol.1, p.112, Defrémercy and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.177.

¹²¹ De Vitry, p.81. Check about wine.

and the saint. Of the brethren, the greater part were cut off by the Saracens, but some live within the walls of the city, near the Tower of David..¹²³ They seem to be utterly helpless. Jacques de Vitry ends his history with concern for "our people...sorrowing and groaning under many miseries and oppressions, called for help from on high, day by day waiting for consolation and help from God and the Holy Roman Church."¹²⁴ Clearly, in his view, the west is responsible for events in the east. Felix Fabri simply generalizes that "the Easterns have this good in them, that they shrink from shedding blood."¹²⁵ Even the Jewish Benjamin of Tudela distinguishes the different kinds of Christians. "In Constantinople is the church of Santa Sophia, and the seat of the Pope of the Greeks, since the Greeks do not obey the Pope of Rome."¹²⁶ Benjamin does not elaborate on any doctrinal differences. Still, Benjamin is like Christian travelers in pointing out a major cultural difference. The "natives are not warlike, but are as women who have no strength to fight."¹²⁷

Of course European Christian travelers saw the loss of crusader conquests as a failure of Latin Christians as well. De Vitry's anger at the

¹²² Fabri, vol.7, p.199.

¹²³ Saewulf, p.21.

¹²⁴ De Vitry, p.119.

¹²⁵ Fabri, vol.7, p.268.

¹²⁶ Signer, p.70, Eisenstein, p.22.

¹²⁷ Signer, p.71, Eisenstein, p.23.

soft, settled *pullani* is clear. Marino Sanudo also joins in. Describing Bethlehem, he expresses anger over Muslim rule and apparently blames Christian sins or military carelessness for the loss of the land. The transition from Biblical to contemporary is seamless. "A mile from Bethlehem the shepherds, we are told by the Gospel, were abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. Would that other shepherds had kept watch over the flocks committed to their charge in that same country! Then perchance a lion out of the forest, that is to say, the power of Saladin, had not slain them, nor had Bendocar, a wolf of the evenings, laid waste what the lion had spared; nor had Melecmessor [*Malik Misr*], a leopard, swift and eager to do evil, even as a leopard is to shed blood, watched over their cities which were left alone."¹²⁸ I do not think that the comparison to animals is meant to be derogatory; he is just extending the Biblical metaphor. But he blurs the secular/religious divide when he blames the crusader rulers (not directly) for not being good shepherds of the flock.

Christian travelers are particularly conscious of liturgical and ritual variations. Burchard's two-week stay among the Armenians gave him plenty of opportunity for observing a different sect. He points out that the ritual is not conducted in Latin, as he is used to. "They use unleavened bread in their Mass, and chant the Epistles, Gospels, and

¹²⁸ Sanudo, p.54.

prefaces, the *Sanctus*, *Pater Noster*, and *Angus Dei* in the Mass, in the same words that we do; but in their own language and letters, for they have a language and alphabet of their own."¹²⁹ The people assemble around the monks and hear Scripture "read in their vulgar tongue, for they know no other."¹³⁰

Burchard comments on distinction between monks, who are celibate and hold real authority, and priests, who must be married in order to conduct the service, but "have no authority, neither do the laity pay any regard to them, and they have no duties save celebrating Divine service."¹³¹ There is no comment on the harsh penalty for adultery. "If a priest's wife be guilty of adultery, he must either be continent, or he must lose his office and his church, and his wife must lose her nose, and her paramour be castrated, even though he be a married man. This was done in my presence."¹³² One wonders if Burchard's extensive discussion of marriage law and punishments for adultery come from the novelty of a married clergy or because he just happened to be present to witness the punishment of an unfaithful wife of a priest. This feeds into the general issue of oversensualizing the Orient. Does Burchard, seeing the Other in Christendom, seize upon sexuality as a way of

¹²⁹ Burchard, p.108.

¹³⁰ Burchard, p.110.

¹³¹ Burchard, pp.108-09.

¹³² Burchard, p.109.

dramatizing difference? Of course, Burchard may simply be reacting to the novelty of the entire situation. Burchard's life was defined in part by celibacy; the sight of a cuckolded priest must have been truly fascinating. Still, one would tend to think that we have here an example of sensualizing, because Burchard also notes that thieves are castrated "that they may not beget children to imitate their fathers' misdeeds"¹³³ and that there are many eunuchs serving noblewomen.

Among Jewish travelers, Jewish sectarians - Karaites and Samaritans - provoke both interest and polemic. These groups, which do not accept the Oral Law and the rabbinic authority that goes with it, present a real challenge to Jewish travelers in that they *almost* share a text and language with the Jews, but ultimately reject the relationship that the Jews maintain with their sacred texts.

The different travelers implicitly assign different values to heterodoxy. Jacob the emissary of Rabbi Yehiel of Paris (1238-44) mentions without comment that at Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal the "Samaritans who sacrifice the paschal offering every year on Mount Gerizim."¹³⁴ Isaac Chelo (1334) distances himself from the Samaritans in the same way as Benjamin, whose book he has read. "There are few real Jews at Nablus, but many Samaritans. They are Cuthim, and come

¹³³ Burchard, pp.109-110.

¹³⁴ Adler, p.116, Eisenstein, p.66.

from Cutha, a city of Iraq. They have a temple on Mount Gerizim which they look upon as the only place where it is permitted to sacrifice to God...Though they rigorously observe the law of Moses, an idol in the form of a pigeon has been found among them. Four letters of our Hebrew alphabet are wanting in theirs, the *alef*, the *he*, the *het*, and the *ain*. Their writing also differs from ours, so that it was impossible for me to read a single word of their pentateuch, which they showed me."¹³⁵ Though Chelo tries to establish a commonality with them by speaking to the Samaritans directly, the effort ultimately fails because they have no text in common.

The Karaites may have a developed creed of their own, but the travelers tend to ignore that possibility. Petahia especially assumes that they are simply ignorant. Though Petahia immediately points to them as Other, he needs to define themselves in relation to him and to the texts which define his world. He puts these people squarely outside the Jewish community. "There are no Jews, only heretics."¹³⁶ Yet Petahia engages them in a dialogue, and they tell him that they have never heard of the things he is telling them. Of course, they are really challenging him back by asserting that their tradition (what their fathers did not tell them) is as valid as Petahia's textuality. The copyist reports

¹³⁵ Adler, p.142, Eisenstein, pp.75-76.

¹³⁶ Adler, p.66, Eisenstein, p.47, has *minim*. Adler translates "only Karaites" though he footnotes that the Hebrew has "heretics", p.372, n.7.

their reaction as ignorant - "we have never heard of the Talmud"¹³⁷ This is a defiant response, negating him by negating the words that define him. (His brother was a Tosafist¹³⁸, so the family was actively engaged in the text.) Petahia still tries to teach them the rudiments of ritual as he knows them - prayer and the Grace after meals.

In contrast, Benjamin does not insert himself into the representation of Karaites. In fact, they are presented as part of a continuum of Sabbath observance, in which, naturally, Rabbinic Jews represent the ideal pole and "*Epikursin*", heretics, the other. "It is four days' voyage from here [Rhodes] to Cyprus, where there are Rabanite Jews and Karaites; there are also some heretical Jews called *Epikursin*, whom the Israelites have excommunicated in all places. They profane the eve of the Sabbath, and observe the first night of the week, which is the termination of the Sabbath."¹³⁹ Presumably, Karaites are not as bad as these "*epikursin*", who have made only one change in Jewish law. Benjamin doesn't know or doesn't tell what else this sect does.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Adler, p.66, Eisenstein, p.48.

¹³⁸ Petahia's brother, Isaac ben Jacob ha-Lavan [the white] of Prague, composed legal and liturgical works. Shlomo Zalman Havlin, "Isaac ben Jacob ha-Lavan of Prague" in EJ.

¹³⁹ Signer, p.75, Eisenstein, p.24.

¹⁴⁰ Adler (quoted in Signer, p.75) notes that Abraham Ibn Ezra was in Cyprus just before arriving in London in 1158, and that it may have been the practices of this group which provided the impetus for Ibn Ezra's writing on the proper observance of the Sabbath.

Perhaps Benjamin privileges behavior over acceptance of the holy books.

Benjamin is clearer in distancing himself from the Samaritans whom he visits in Nablus. He is explicit about the fact that to him, they are not Jewish. "Nablus, which is Shechem on Mount Ephraim, where there are no Jews; the place...contains about 1,000 Cuthim, who observe the written law of Moses alone, and are called Samaritans."¹⁴¹ These Samaritans are scrupulous in observing laws of ritual purity. The descendants of Aaron do not intermarry with the rest of the community, which claims descent from the tribe of Ephraim.¹⁴² All of the Samaritans "guard themselves from the defilement of the dead, of the bones of the slain, and of graves; and they remove the garments which they have worn before they go to the place of worship, and they bathe and put on fresh clothes."¹⁴³ This practice of washing before prayer must have seemed to Benjamin to be a continuation of Temple ritual, and one wonders if he was aware of the similarity with Muslim preparations for prayer.

Benjamin goes on to elaborate the Otherness of the Samaritans by claiming that they are not deficient in knowledge of text, but only, literally, in the articulation of it. He repeats what appears to be a local

¹⁴¹ Signer, p.81, Eisenstein, p.25.

¹⁴² Signer, p.81, Eisenstein, p.26.

anti-Samaritan polemic which uses Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as Self from which this Other deviates. "Their alphabet lacks three letters, namely *he*, *heth* and *ain*, [as transliterated. Each letter is at the beginning of one of the qualities Benjamin mentions]. The letter *he* is taken from Abraham our father, because they have no dignity, the letter *heth* from Isaac, because they have no kindness, and the letter *ain* from Jacob, because they have no humility."¹⁴⁴ The letters are values - dignity, kindness and modesty - that Benjamin assigns to Self, to Jews. By the twelfth century, Jewish sermons were quite formalized, and it is possible that Benjamin is paraphrasing a well-known bit of preaching.¹⁴⁵

Benjamin notes that in place of the missing letters, the Samaritans use the silent *alef* "by which we can tell that they are not of the seed of Israel, although they know the law of Moses with the exception of these three letters."¹⁴⁶ Knowledge of the law is not enough. The implication here is that all Jews ought to be able to speak exactly alike and that knowledge - presumably even with acceptance - of the written Torah does not make for a Jew. (The split over the acceptance of the Oral Law goes back a long time. Rejecting Oral Law has been a mark of heresy since..) Different speech patterns combine with rejection

¹⁴³ Signer, p.81, Eisenstein, p.26.

¹⁴⁴ Signer, p.81, Eisenstein, p.26.

¹⁴⁵ The Hebrew adjectives are a close but not exact parallel of the Jewish self-definition of the Jews as merciful, kind and modest. *Yevamot* 79a.

of the Oral Law mark the Samaritans as Other, while physical characteristics alone would not make a Jew Other. The Jews of Khulam, whom Benjamin recognizes as Jews, share physical characteristics with their geographic neighbors, yet their small knowledge of Jewish texts defines their Jewishness, keeps them from being Other. "The inhabitants are all black, and the Jews are also. The latter are good and benevolent. They know the law of Moses and the prophets, and to a small extent the Talmud and Halacha."¹⁴⁷

In Damascus Benjamin finds both Karaites and Samaritans, and recognizes that although he categorizes them together as sectarians, Others, non-Jews, they have separate definitions of self. He says that "One hundred Karaites dwell here, also 400 Cuthim, and there is peace between them, but they do not intermarry."¹⁴⁸ He is aware that the two groups consider themselves distinct enough not to marry. Generally he mentions sectarians without polemic. For example, in Ashkelon, Benjamin distinguishes between Jews, Karaites and Cuthim, referring to them separately.¹⁴⁹ Benjamin refers to the three men who head the Jewish population there, but has nothing to say about it or about its relations with other sects.

¹⁴⁶ Signer, p.81, Eisenstein, p.26.

¹⁴⁷ Signer, p.121, Eisenstein, p.39.

¹⁴⁸ Signer, p.91, Eisenstein, p.29.

In the fifteenth century, Meshullam of Volterra repeats Benjamin of Tudela's discussion of Samaritans and Karaites, but is even more vehement about the differences. "You know already that the Karaites observe the written law and the Samaritans part of the written law, but they are idolators."¹⁵⁰ According to him, they do not use six letters of the Hebrew alphabet, rather than the three Benjamin mentioned. The Samaritans and Karaites are distinguished from "the good Jews who keep both written law and oral law like we do"¹⁵¹

Meshullam also discusses Samaritan and Karaite communities in Egypt. Apparently he expected to find some in Alexandria because he writes that "there are in Alexandria about sixty Jewish households with no Karaites or Samaritans among them, but only Rabbanites."¹⁵² In Cairo, where the population of Karates and Samaritans is substantial, Meshullam expands upon what he expects the reader to know. "You know already that the Karaites observe the written law and the Samaritans part of the written law but they are idolators."¹⁵³ They are missing six letters, though he does not assign a moral virtue or lack thereof to that. He has no access to their books because they are in a

¹⁴⁹ The Signer translation, pp.88-89 refers to "Rabbanite Jews", but Eisenstein, p.28. has simply yehudim, Jews.

¹⁵⁰ Adler, p.171, Eisenstein, p.93.

¹⁵¹ Adler, p.171, Eisenstein, p.93

¹⁵² Adler, p.161, Eisenstein, p.90.

¹⁵³ Adler, p.171, Eisenstein, p.93.

different script. He then elaborates on what makes them different. "They do not go up to Jerusalem, for they say that Mount Gerizim is the Mount of Jerusalem, and they sacrifice a lamb for Passover and do not break its bones. They live in a quarter of their own, and they have a Synagogue of their own, and they keep Sabbath till midday, and then they profane it. Also the Karaites have two synagogues of their own..."¹⁵⁴ However removed they are from normative practice, they are under the supervision of the Nagid, the head of the Jewish community.

Isaac Chelo (1334) is willing to let the Samaritans speak for themselves and even examines their writings. "There are few real Jews at Nablus, but many Samaritans. They are *Cuthim*, and come from Cutha, a city of Iraq. They have a temple on Mount Gerizim which they look upon as the only place where it is permitted to sacrifice to God."¹⁵⁵

While the travelers are acutely aware of sectarians, they are not necessarily in direct contact with them. Sometimes the travelers do tackle larger issues of belief, but rarely do they talk directly to the sectarians. Of course there are exceptions. We have already seen Petahia trying to teach Karaites the correct prayer to say after meals. Jacques de Vitry is an extremely critical observer of different Christians. He carefully enumerates the groups and wherever possible discusses

¹⁵⁴ Adler, p.171, Eisenstein, p.93.

¹⁵⁵ Adler, p.141, Eisenstein, p.75.

their practices and beliefs. His disdain for sectarians is obvious. Jacques de Vitry asks the "Greeks and Syrians"¹⁵⁶ why they hate the Jacobites. He also speaks to the Jacobites themselves. "Now, when I made most careful inquiry of the aforesaid Jacobites whether they held that there was only one nature in Christ, they said that they did not; I know not whether they were influenced by fear or some other reason."¹⁵⁷ He recognizes his own role in the conversation and the effect that he might have on the answer. This shows a certain degree of self-awareness while still portraying Eastern Christians as timid and somewhat childlike in trying to please him.

Perhaps it is inevitable that de Vitry's assumption of inferior intelligence by the local population corresponds with an assumption of social inferiority as well. De Vitry writes that "in the aforesaid Holy Land there are many other nations, with different customs, who differ greatly from one another in their Divine service and religious rites, to wit, Syrians, Greeks, Jacobites, Maronites, Nestorians, Armenians, and Georgians, who both for trade, agriculture and other useful arts, are very necessary to the Holy Land, that they may sow the land, and plant vineyards, to yield them fruits of increase."¹⁵⁸ In other words, de Vitry thinks it is a good idea to have the locals around to do the manual labor

¹⁵⁶ De Vitry, p.75.

¹⁵⁷ De Vitry, p.76.

¹⁵⁸ De Vitry, p.58.

which is necessary to support a community but still beneath the dignity of Western Europeans.

In the end, the travelers come out using sectarians as exotic background that confirms their own beliefs and social systems. Just as observing pagans makes for interesting writing, meeting sectarians allows the writer to draw the line between the familiar and the unknown without actually rethinking his own belief system.

Other religions - Muslims, Christians, and Jews

When it comes to other religions, travelers present these familiar others in unfamiliar ways. As with the sectarians, the travelers are not that interested in extensive theology. Few give the reader any information at all; those who do are quite minimal...But instead of using established religions to confirm their stances - this is taken for granted and obvious in the derogatory terms one finds - the travelers use other religions to point out interesting things about their own. Where sects were threatening, other religions are so far away that they can occasionally have something to teach. We should not take this too far,

though. The main connection between the religions is one of hostility, and the travelers write as men of unwavering belief.

Burchard is the only Christian traveler among our group to explicitly explain Muslim belief and practice, especially as they relate to Christianity. Burchard read the Qur'an, presumably to see how it deals with Christians. "The Saracens pay great honor to St. John next to Christ and the Blessed Virgin, and think a great deal of him, They truly declare that Christ is the Word of God, but they say that He is not God. They say that the Blessed Virgin conceived of the Holy Ghost, bore Him as a virgin, and remained a virgin. They say that John was a great and exceeding holy prophet. They say that Mahomet was God's messenger, and was sent by him to themselves alone. This I have read in the Alcoran, which is their book of law."¹⁵⁹ Later he again discusses the place of Christian belief in Islam. "...the Saracens, who preach Mahomet and keep his law. They call our Lord Jesus Christ the greatest of the prophets, and confess that He was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. But they deny that He suffered and was buried, but choose to say that He ascended into heaven, and sitteth upon the right hand of the Father, because they admit Him to be the Son of God. But they declare that Mahomet sits on His left hand."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Burchard, p.50. Translations of the Qur'an into Latin were available in Burchard's time.

¹⁶⁰ Burchard, p.103.

Marino Sanuto tells his readers about Arabia in which "in the city of Mecca, the abominable Mahomet is worshipped."¹⁶¹ Though he may not understand the religion, he does know about the importance of Mecca.

Ludolph and Felix Fabri, among others, are aware of the Muslim prohibition on drinking, though the travelers are not really familiar with the specifics of Islamic law. Ludolph knows that blaspheming Islam earns a person the death penalty. In Cyprus, Ludolph mentions "the Turks, who keep Friday holy."¹⁶²

Few of the travelers use the term "mosque", referring instead to Saracen churches. One exception is the *Guide-Book to Jerusalem*, in which the pilgrim shows that he has some idea of Muslim worship. "Indeed, the Saracens to this day call the Lord's temple The Rock: it is held in so great veneration that none of them dare defile it with any filth, as they defile the other holy places; but from remote and far-distant regions they come to adore it from the days of Solomon to the present time. Whenever the Saracens have possession of the holy city, Jerusalem, they allow no Christian to enter the temple."¹⁶³ An almost identical description is found in the earlier account of Jacques de Vitry, and Ludolph notices the same things. "The Saracens pay the greatest

¹⁶¹ Sanudo, p.4.

¹⁶² Ludolph, p.45.

reverence to the Lord's Temple, keeping it exceeding clean both within and without, and all alike entering it unshod."¹⁶⁴ But after describing it from his own perspective, he makes the leap to describing it from a Muslim perspective. "They call it 'the holy rock,' not 'the Temple,' and therefore they say to one another, 'Let us go to the holy Rock.' They do not say, 'Let us go to the Temple.'"¹⁶⁵ Sanudo notices the muezzins, if he is slightly confused about their purpose, and also notices the need for clean feet in a mosque, even if he seems to attribute this more to respect than religious law. "above every one of the gates there stands a lofty tower, which the Saracen priests are wont to ascend, and proclaim the law of Mahomet. No one dares to enter this enclosure save with clean feet, and to this end gatekeepers or porters are appointed."¹⁶⁶

Ludolph distinguishes between Muslims and Arabs, though his distinction makes clear that in his mind, Islam properly belongs to Arabs - any other type of person who professes Islam must properly belong to the Christian world. "You must know that the Turks are tall black men and most zealous Saracens, yet not of the Saracen race, but rather renegade Christians."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Guidebook, p.19.

¹⁶⁴ Ludolph, p.98, De Vitry, p.42.

¹⁶⁵ Ludolph, p.98.

¹⁶⁶ Sanudo, p.47.

¹⁶⁷ Ludolph, pp.29-30.

In a similar vein, Christian pilgrims sometimes appreciate politics within the Muslim world. Jacques de Vitry has a certain amount of historical perspective. "Indeed, both the Caliph and Soldan of Egypt were unable to defend their kingdoms against the bravery and impetuous inroads of our people, and both used to pay great sums every year as tribute to the King of Jerusalem, especially when the Egyptians were afraid of the Soldan of Damascus. On the other hand, the King of Damascus used to pay much money and obtain truce and security from our people, who lay between the Damascenes and the Egyptians."¹⁶⁸

Though the Jews in the Middle East have the social habits of the Muslims, their European counterparts do not hesitate to see them as authentic and committed to their religion. But with non-Jews, the medieval Jewish traveler has no common language or heritage. He needs to find meaningful ways of classifying the different groups he encounters. His system has to explain how the groups differ from each other, and why such differences matter. This process of description, classification and evaluation, like the writing process itself, is more self-conscious than it appears. The writers are fully aware of, and comfortable with, their ability to name, categorize and judge others. This reification takes many forms.

¹⁶⁸ De Vitry, p.22.

First, the travelers divide the world into Jews and non-Jews. Among the non-Jews are Muslims and Christians. All the travelers expect their readers to have some familiarity with these two religions, though not all the travelers deal with them to the same degree. The pilgrims, traveling from countries under Christian control, do not explain the basic tenets of Christianity. (The one exception is Benjamin of Tudela, and his home town was a relative newcomer to the Christian orbit.) Some add in a few words about Islam. Though they use disparaging terms to refer to Jesus and Muhammad, they do not engage in any argumentative form of polemic.

Benjamin feels that he has to introduce the Christian world to his readers. "Rome is the head of the kingdoms of Christendom (*malkhut edom*), and contains about 200 Jews, who occupy an honourable position and pay no tribute, and amongst them are officials of the Pope Alexander [III,1159-81], the spiritual head of all Christendom [*malkhut edom*]."¹⁶⁹ In any case, Benjamin sees "Edom" as an entity with leadership and territory. Similarly, Islam is both a religious and political unit, so that the "Caliph Emir al Muminin al Abbasi of the family of Mohammed [or: the insane] is at the head of the Mohammedan religion and all the kings of Islam obey him; he occupies a similar position to that

¹⁶⁹ Signer, p.63, Eisenstein, p.19.

held by the Pope over the Christians.”¹⁷⁰ He also describes the poll tax in Persia as obligatory on all males over the age of fifteen “in the kingdom of Ishmael.”¹⁷¹ Throughout his writing, this is how he constructs groups. Later, though, he refers to the Knights Templar as coming from “the land of the Franks and the land of Edom”¹⁷² (emphasis mine)

Though hostile to Christianity and Islam as religions, Benjamin uses their dates as fixed positions, describing Nero as having “lived at the time of Jesus the Nazarene, ending with Pepin, who freed the land of Sepharad from Islam, and was father of Charlemagne.”¹⁷³

Benjamin mentions Mecca without any explanation or identification, only mentioning the pilgrims (Heb. *to'im*, mistaken ones) “that come from distant lands to go to Mecca, which is in the Yemen”¹⁷⁴ The readers are expected to know why people would make pilgrimage to Mecca. Sometimes he mentions Muslim sites that have no significance at all for Jews, notably the mosque of Damascus and the grave of Ali ibn Abi Talib. (Though Shi'ites would almost certainly not let

¹⁷⁰ Signer, p.95, Eisenstein, p.31.

¹⁷¹ Signer, p.110, Eisenstein, p.36.

¹⁷² Signer, p.83, Eisenstein, p.26. Signer's translation smoothes the passage out to read “the land of the Franks and the other parts of Christendom.”

¹⁷³ Signer, p.63, Eisenstein, p.20. The Hebrew has Pepin capturing Sepharad from the Ishmaelites, presenting a more activist Christian population.

¹⁷⁴ Signer, p.96, Eisenstein, p.31.

a Jew in to see the grave, it is quite unlikely that he was ever in the region.) Benjamin, probably born while his city was under Umayyad rule, expects his readers to know a few things about Islam, but not about the rulership or even the Sunni-Shi'ite split. He explains the role of the caliph in Baghdad as parallel to that of the Pope, and then has to explain the position of the Fatimids. (He was probably in Cairo during the vizierate of Salah-al-din 1169-71.) At the palace in Cairo "resides the Emir al Muminin, a descendant of Abu Talib. (Hebrew *Ibn Abi Talib*) All his subjects are called '*Alawiyyim*' because they rose up against the Emir al Muminin al Abbasi (the Abbaside Caliph) who resides in Baghdad. And between the two parties there is a lasting feud, for the former have set up a rival throne in Zoan (Egypt)."¹⁷⁵

Benjamin describes a number of religions. He assumes that his readers know the basic beliefs, if not administrative structures, of Christianity and Islam. He does mention other beliefs, sometimes condemning them as silly or superstitious, but never engaging in what would call a polemic. But there are the standard medieval Jewish insults against the two large monotheistic faiths - Christian pilgrims are "mistaken ones" and Muhammad is "the insane".

Isaac Chelo mentions Capernaum without any indication that it may have significance to Christians. Samuel ben Samson does not

¹⁷⁵ Signer, p.129, Eisenstein, p.41.

mention other religions except where they interact with Judaism. Christianity exists only as a testament to the supremacy of Judaism, and Islam matters only insofar as Muslims venerate Jewish holy sites. But in a way both are taken for granted.

Meshullam and his readers are quite conversant with Christian practice. He transliterates into Hebrew that he met up with a group of "pelligrini" on their way to the "sepulcher."

Samuel ben Samson (1210) is not at all interested in explaining to his readers about Islam. Jacob the emissary (1238-44) describes Muslim festivities at al-Aqsa as similar to Jewish ones that used to be held at the same site, "if one may compare holy things with profane."¹⁷⁶ He refers to their "id", letting Muslims name their own festival rather than using his own word. Further, he recognizes holidays and worship as categories into which one may insert either Jewish or Muslim practice. Of course he has a value judgment (Jewish worship is sacred; Muslim worship profane) but he allows the category to expand to another group.

Meshullam of Volterra (1481) introduces his reader to the basics of Muslim practice, though he pays no attention whatsoever to theology. "The Moslems when they go to the mosque, bathe, and every mosque has a fountain in order that they can wash therein five times a day, and

they keep their Sabbath on Friday; but they only keep it holy two hours while they are in their house of prayer. They have two feasts in the year, and they fast thirty days consecutively once a year. This fast of theirs is like the Jewish fast, and it is with reference to them that the author of the prayer *Aleinu le-shabeah* says that they worship vanity, *habel*, *h* for their five daily washes, *b* for their two annual feasts, and *l* for their thirty days' fast."¹⁷⁷ The polemic is of the standard kind.

Meshullam may or may not know of the Muslim prohibition on wine. He notes at Gaza that only the Jews make wine.

Isaac Chelo (1334) mentions a tomb of Rabbi Ziphai outside Hebron and says that miracles are known to happen there. "The Arabs who have witnessed these miracles maintain that this Rabbi Ziphai was a doctor of their law. But every one knows that Rabbi Ziphai is written of in the Talmud as a holy personage."¹⁷⁸ The idea that someone else may be buried there does not seem to enter his mind.

Just as the travelers see Jews as members of a group and also as individuals, they often apply this same approach to members of other religions. But there is one major difference. Where individual Jews are

¹⁷⁶ Adler, p.119, Eisenstein, p.67.

¹⁷⁷ Adler, p.174, Eisenstein, p.93. Meshullam does not refer to the month of Ramadan by name. As with the *waqf*, he understands the concept but does not adopt the terminology.

¹⁷⁸ Adler, p.136, Eisenstein, p.73.

mentioned, we have seen that this is usually to thank them or to point out their high status within the community. In the case of Muslims and Christians, individuals figure only as representatives of their religion or as characters in a story that demonstrates Jewish claims to the holy sites (or in Meshullam's case, the need to be wary of guides.) They are props in the drama, so that their names do not matter, and in fact only caliphs, popes and the occasional high-ranking individual are referred to by name.

Benjamin gives a great deal of attention to the Abbasid caliph, probably Al-Mustanjid (r.1160-1170). In what seems like a stylized account, he reports that despite living in immense wealth, the caliph lives on his own earnings. (Never mind that the earnings come from cashing in on his position - he sews and then authorizes his servants to sell coverlets with the caliphal seal.) Though he describes in detail the ceremonial of the caliph on "El-id-bed-Ramazan"¹⁷⁹ he does not seem to have seen it himself. He mentions that the Fatimid Imam goes out only twice a year "once on the occasion of the great festival, and again

¹⁷⁹ Signer, p.97, Eisenstein, p.32 Presumably *id al-fitr*, the breaking of the fast of Ramadan, though Benjamin seems to conflate it with *id al-'adha* and says that the caliph then kills a camel "and this is their passover-sacrifice." Signer p.98, Eisenstein, p.32.

when the river Nile rises."¹⁸⁰ The Nile rises in the fall, but Benjamin's report suggests that he is telling what he has heard, not what he has seen himself.

Another story Benjamin tells about a Muslim individual involves a dispute over Daniel's sepulcher. Like the story of Mu'awiyah determining who was to receive the napkin of Jesus, this is about a ruler who has to settle a dispute over a sacred object in the religion of the travel writer. Residents on both sides of the Tigris in Susa wanted Daniel's grave - and the good fortune it brought - on their side of the river. Sinjar Shah ben Shah (whom Benjamin notes is called Sultan al-Fars al-Kabir in Arabic)¹⁸¹ proposed a Solomonic decision. "He said, 'It is not meet to do this ignominy unto Daniel the prophet, but I command you to measure the bridge from both sides, and to take the coffin of Daniel and place it inside another coffin of crystal, so that the wooden coffin be within that of crystal, and to suspend this from the middle of the bridge by a chain of iron; at this spot you must build a synagogue for all comers, so that whoever wishes to pray there, be he Jew or Gentile, may do so.' And to this very day the coffin is suspended from the bridge. And the king

¹⁸⁰ Signer, pp.129-30, Eisenstein, p.41, translates "the great festival" as "*be-sh'at hagam*" The Imam at the time of Benjamin's visit was probably al-Adid, r.1160-71, the last of the Fatimid line. get something on Fatimid ceremonial.

¹⁸¹ The reference is apparently to Mu'izz al-Din, r.1118-57.

commanded that out of respect for Daniel no fisherman should catch fish within a mile above or a mile below."¹⁸²

Jews, Samaritans and Assassins figure in Christian pilgrimage accounts only briefly and in the shadows, as part of the exotica of the east. The Christian travelers from Europe (especially Ludolph von Suchem) had some experience with Jews. But in this new context as pilgrims, the European Christians joined Jews, Samaritans and Assassins as "Others", distinct from the dominant culture. This shared experience of outsider status does not engender any feelings of solidarity. It does, however, lead to a certain relativism, developed most fully by Ludolph, that sees the category of "Other" as objective, filled by different people (or groups of people) in different places.

The travelers recognize that they are seen, not just seeing. For example, John Poloner's comments on the name-changes of the Christian community indicate an interest in Muslim views of Christians. At Antioch "all the faithful, who had been called Galilaeans, were called Christians. At this day they are called Nazarenes by the Saracens."¹⁸³ Apparently he has heard the Arabic word for "Christians" and feels that his readers would benefit from knowing it.

¹⁸² Signer, p.109, Eisenstein, p.36.

¹⁸³ Ludolph, p.35.

Ludolph wants his readers to understand not just how Christians are referred to, but how they and their holy sites are perceived. He uses the experience of Jews in his native Germany as a starting point. Apparently Ludolph's readers had heard that there were oil lamps kept continually lit in the Sepulcher. Here he reports (presumably with reference to his own experience) that if the light kindled by the "ancient Georgians" "should fail it remains without any light whatsoever, and is altogether without honor and respect, for the Saracens have as much respect for Christ's sepulchre as Christians have for a Jewish synagogue."¹⁸⁴

Ludolph again uses the experience of Jews to explain the most negative possible result of otherness - violence against the minority group. Ludolph tells with very little emotion, and absolutely no historical context, of an outbreak of anti-Christian violence in Damascus. His comparison to anti-Jewish violence in Germany makes him appear sympathetic to the fate of a religious minority. "In the year of our Lord one thousand three hundred and forty-one, on St. George's Eve, [April 22] there was a persecution and murder of Christians by the King and a mob of Damascus, even as of late there was of the Jews in this county;

¹⁸⁴ Ludolph, p.105.

but the persecution did not last for more than a month and was well avenged through the Soldan, as you will hear hereafter."¹⁸⁵

For some of the travelers, seeing shifts in who holds power may suggest that domination is not the automatic right of a certain group, and neither is submission the inevitable fate of others.

CHAPTER FIVE - SACRED SITES

Shrines in self-defense

Pilgrim travelers used their books to engage their readers in a direct conversation about who was and who was not a member of the writer's world. But travelers also let the places do the talking. This is travel writing without the writer. We have already discussed the presence or absence of narrators in pilgrim accounts. Here the narrator recuses himself entirely. If shrines truly can express themselves, then the very text becomes unnecessary.

When shrines do speak, what do they have to say? Mostly, it seems, they say "hands off" to those who would destroy them. Christians and Jews tell stories of places and holy graves asserting their independence, as it were, from foreign rulers. Miracles prevent all kinds of desecration.

¹⁸⁵ Ludolph, p.130.

Medieval Christians often, and Jewish pilgrims always, visit their holy sites as tolerated tourists. The holy places themselves are under the physical control of another faith. No wonder that pilgrims are so often relieved to find holy sites in good condition, and no wonder that they are worried that other places will fall into ruin. Even dedicated believers assume that that relics and shrines need human tending. Places that survive without caretaking are miracles in themselves. But some miracles go beyond survival. In some cases there is a definite, active event, such as a lion protecting a grave.

Such dramatic events very rarely happen at the well-established holy places in Hebron and Jerusalem. In fact, at the well known shrines, the pilgrims often admire the buildings and architecture of other faiths.

The theme of holy sites and relics having some kind of power to protect themselves from infidels recurs frequently in Christian and Jewish accounts, but hardly ever in the writing of Ibn Jubayr or Ibn Battuta. For the most part, Muslim holy places did not need to act in self-defense. Non-Muslims were barred from Mecca and had been almost from the birth of Islam. Though there was intra-religious struggle over the area, and even violence in the tenth century, Mecca stayed Muslim. In fact, hardly any Muslim holy sites anywhere left Muslim political control until the late Middle Ages. The glaring exception would be, of

course, Jerusalem during the Crusader era, but Ibn Jubayr, traveling just then, has no stories about miracles defending Muslim Jerusalem or its shrines.

Another, less clear, theory about why Muslim shrines are not defended by miracles may be that tactile piety functioned differently in the Muslim world than in the Christian one. Ibn Jubayr, for example, attaches great importance to shrines and the blessings that come to people who visit them, particularly at places in Mecca and Medina that are associated with the life of Muhammad. But he does not ascribe miraculous infidel-chasing powers to them. Ibn Battuta attributes miracles to some of the saintly people he meets or hears of on his trip, but these stories usually involve physical sustenance rather than defense of a particular location. In Alexandria, Ibn Battuta meets and hears of Sufi masters and relates some of their miracles. For example, one of these men made food appear and another predicted correctly that Ibn Battuta would meet certain people later in his travels.¹ Ibn Battuta also says he read that one of Muhammad's companions died in the desert, and in this man's honor, water and shrouds appeared from nowhere so that the righteous man's body could be properly prepared for burial. After the man was buried, the water source disappeared.² In all these anecdotes, the focus is on the holy man himself, not on a

¹ Gibb vol.1, pp.21-24, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, pp.37-38.

sacred site. Individuals may be powerless against time and nature, but places are permanent and protected.

It may be that the Western Christian (and sometimes Jewish) trend of giving power to relics is a way of dealing with powerlessness. We will see in these stories that very often a grave site or relic defends itself from desecration by foreign rulers. Absent a physical protector, the site is guarded by miracles.

The power of graves and holy remains is a particularly strong motif in religious travel writing. Almost all Christian travelers incorporate formulaic telling of bad things that happen to people - Muslims, Jews and Christians - who disrespect holy sites or relics.

Johannes Phocas, a monk of the Eastern church who traveled in 1185, tells the story of the tomb of St. George. "They said that the present intruded Bishop of the Latin rite ventured to open the mouth of the sepulchre, and that when the marble slab which closed it was taken away there was disclosed a large grotto, on the inner side of which was found the tomb of the saint; when, however, he endeavored to open this also, fire was seen to flash forth from the sepulchre, and left one of the men half burned and another burned to death."³

² Gibb vol.1, p.140, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, pp.222-23.

³ Phocas, p.34.

A similar thing happened at Bethlehem, according to the German John Poloner, writing in the 1420's. The story of an evil person tampering with holy sites takes the following form in this account. The church built upon the spot of Jesus' birth had marble-covered walls which "a certain Soldan, when he beheld its wondrous paneling, thought that he would carry it off and therewith encase and adorn his own palace in Cairo."⁴ The Fatimid caliph is not named, and no date is given. His plans were thwarted when a snake appeared on the walls. The snake's "track on the wall may be seen at this day, as I myself saw."⁵ Burchard, a German Dominican monk writing about two hundred years earlier, tells the same story of the church at Bethlehem, with the Sultan himself witness to the miracle.⁶ The Venetian Marino Sanudo (1320's) follows Burchard's account almost to the letter, adding that, "The Saracens respect all churches which are dedicated to the glorious Virgin, but this one above all others."⁷ Ludolph von Suchem, some thirty years after Sanudo, alludes to, but does not tell in detail, of a miracle that prevented Muslims from carrying off part of the church of Bethlehem. They had

⁴ Poloner, p.19.

⁵ Poloner, p.19.

⁶ Burchard, p.88.

⁷ Sanudo, p.53

"wanted to carry off some of the columns, but were stopped by a vision."⁸

Nature helps in the guarding of Christian holy sites. Theoderich, Fetellus, John of Würzburg and the anonymous Guidebook to Jerusalem mention the martyred Christians, killed by Saracens, whose bodies lie in a cave guarded by a lion.⁹ Nazareth has a similar quality. "All men tell of a great and wondrous miracle about the city, that whenever the infidels attempt to attack it, they are stricken with blindness or some such plague from heaven, and are forced to desist."¹⁰ Ludolph visits the monastery of St. Karioth, now desolate, and reports that when the abbot and his monks died, their bodies remained preserved for a long time, "neither were the Saracens able to destroy them, albeit they often tried."¹¹

The Guidebook to Jerusalem, written in the 1350's, ends with the story of the Jews of Beirut crucifying an image of Jesus. The image "was afterwards carried to Rome, and placed in the church of St. John Lateran, where it is most devoutly revered by all Christian people."¹² John Poloner, seventy years later, also tells the story of some people

⁸ Ludolph, p.94.

⁹ Würzburg, p49, Guidebook, p.23.

¹⁰ Theoderich, p.68.

¹¹ Ludolph, p.93.

¹² Guidebook, p.40.

(not identified as Jews, but only as "infidels") mocking an image of Jesus. The same event is retold in John of Würzburg (1160's) and Jacques de Vitry (1220's) as well. The incident of the Jews of Beirut mistreating an image of Jesus is told by the German Theoderich in 1172, but in this earlier version the story is extended to include the eventual submission of the Jews to Christianity.

The attempted desecration of the body of Mary at the time of her burial appears often. Theoderich tells the story of a Jew who stole the shroud covering Mary's body as she was being carried to her burial. The Jew's hands and arms withered. Theoderich attributes the incident to "the burning hatred and envy with which they had so long persecuted her Son."¹³ John Poloner notes that the place of this incident, in the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem of his time, was marked.¹⁴ Sanudo repeats the story of the Jew who wanted to steal the body of Mary, but this time the Jew is the High Priest, so that institutionalized Judaism replaces individual Jews as the focus of the story.

Jews had their own stories of graves and relics being miraculously protected from desecration. Jacob ha Cohen, a European Jew traveling in the twelfth century when Jerusalem was under Crusader rule, tells the story of gentile veneration and desecration of

¹³ Theoderich, p.39.

¹⁴ Poloner, p.13.

graves together, though the manuscript is somewhat confused. He explains that tombs are tightly shut because "Gentiles used to take the dead out of their graves because they wanted the golden threads with which their shrouds were sewn."¹⁵ Sometimes the desecration is more serious, and Jacob tells two stories (perhaps the same one) about a knight (from Provence, in one version) who came to the grave of a Jew (either the Biblical Joseph or an anonymous pious Jew) and was struck dead instantly when he tried to physically desecrate the grave. One of the accounts ends with Christian clergy trying to blunt the dramatic effect of the story. "Immediately the captains and monks gathered and said that he was not punished because of the Jew, but because he wounded the honor of the teacher of Jesus, and Jesus was wrath with him and killed him; and they said all this before the country folk."¹⁶

Even dead gentiles are not immune. A gentile buried on the spot in Caesarea where the ten martyrs¹⁷ were killed is unable to rest in peace and comes to the rulers of the city in a dream begging to be reinterred elsewhere, "but the Gentile took no heed of his words. That gentleman was a fisherman and all the fishermen died..."¹⁸

¹⁵ Adler, p.96, Eisenstein, p.60.

¹⁶ Adler, p.96, Eisenstein, p.60.

¹⁷ get EJ on aseret harugai malchut

¹⁸ Adler, p.97, Eisenstein, p.61.

According to Samuel ben Samson , traveling in 1210, Muslims venerate the tomb of Rabbi Haninah ben Hyrcanus. Samuel reports on the devotion to the site. "Two Ishmaelites remain there continually to attend to the light and supply oil in honor of the righteous man."¹⁹ and they do the same for Jonathan ben Uzziel²⁰. "The Ishmaelites bring oil to it and have a light burning there in his honor. They make their vows there too, to his glory."²¹

Only rarely does Benjamin of Tudela, at the end of the twelfth century, divert from a strict geographical mode into the storytelling mode, complete with miracles. He tells one long story in the name of Abraham al Constantini, "the pious recluse, who was one of the mourners of Jerusalem".²² Two laborers, working on the restoration of the church of Mount Zion, were making up for lost time by working through their meal break when they discovered a cave. Looking for money, they stumbled upon the graves of Kings David and Solomon and the other Kings of Judah. "The two men essayed to enter the chamber, when a fierce wind came forth from the entrance of the cave and smote them, and they fell to the ground like dead men, and there they lay until evening. And there came forth a wind like a man's voice,

¹⁹ Adler, p.107, Eisenstein, p.63.

²⁰ get EJ on him

²¹ Adler, p.107, Eisenstein, p.63.

²² Signer, p.85, Eisenstein, p.27.

crying out: 'Arise and go forth from this place!' So the men rushed forth in terror, and they came unto the Patriarch, and related these things to him."²³ The Patriarch called in Rabbi Abraham, who told the men what they had found and suggested that they go with him and the Patriarch to revisit the site. The men were afraid, and said "We will not enter there, for the Lord doth not desire to show it to any man."²⁴ So the Patriarch had the place closed up. The story has many of the "they appreciate it too" elements for which medieval Jewish travelers are famous. The two workers instinctively recognize the hand of God in the story, and the Patriarch recognizes the wisdom and authority of Rabbi Abraham Constantini.

A less dramatic incident appears in the writing of Jacob ha Cohen. Someone who cut wood from the forest surrounding the grave of Zipporah, the wife of Moses, was killed by a lion that habitually protected her grave. To prove that the lion was not just a wild beast on a rampage, Jacob ha Cohen remarks that after the killing, "then the lion returned to her grave."²⁵ Similarly, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, in Hebron, is sealed off, "and they are not permitted to break into that wall,

²³ Signer, p.85, Eisenstein, p.27.

²⁴ Signer, p.86, Eisenstein, p.27.

²⁵ Adler, p.97, Eisenstein, p.61.

for once the monks made a small window therein and a strong wind came and killed them all and they closed the window."²⁶

Jacob the Emissary, visiting Jerusalem from France in 1238-44, tells only one story about a grave's being divinely protected, presumably from a Byzantine emperor. "On another side of Jerusalem is the Lion's cave where are the bones of the righteous who were slaughtered by the King of Greece for the sanctity of the name. He ordered that they should be burnt on the following day, but in the night the lion came and removed them one by one into the cave out of the nether pool which they had filled. And behold, in the morning the Greek King found the lion at the entrance to the cave with the slain, and then the King and all his people knew that they were saints and their bones have remained there till this day."²⁷ Note the lion as protector of sacred bones, a common theme among the Christian pilgrims as well.

A century later, Isaac Chelo tells a story of Jonah's tomb influencing a Muslim who had evil designs on the Jewish population as a whole, not just against a particular holy site. "A Mussulman lord, enemy of the Jews, formerly dwelt at Kefar Kanah. He came forth one day from his palace filled with evil designs against the sons of Israel. Passing near the tomb of the prophet, he suddenly beheld before him a

²⁶ Adler, p.98, Eisenstein, p.61.

²⁷ Adler, p.119, Eisenstein, p.67.

man in armor of terrifying aspect."²⁸ The man turned out to be none other than Jonah himself, and the Muslim noble became a good friend to the Jews.

One of the few such stories in a Muslim account is Ibn Battuta's description of a tree in South India. Every year, the tree grows one leaf which is patterned with the Arabic letters of the *shahada*, the credal statement that "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his apostle." According to Ibn Battuta, a sultan who knew how to read Arabic converted when he saw one of these leaves. To Ibn Battuta's time, every year "at the time of its falling trustworthy persons from among both the Muslims and the infidels sit underneath the tree, and when the leaf falls the Muslims take half of it and the other half is placed in the treasury of the infidel sultan."²⁹ The non-Muslim population respects this miracle. Those who do not respect the message are punished. Ibn Battuta reports that a non-Muslim sultan had tried to have the tree uprooted but it sprouted up again and the sultan died.

²⁸ Adler, p.145, Eisenstein, p.77. Chelo notes that the Muslims have built a mosque over Jonah's tomb.

²⁹ Gibb, vol.4, p.811, Defrémery and Sanguinetti vol.4, pp.85-86.

Holy to all

These last anecdotes show that just as the holy sites have the power to repel, they also have the power to attract. Most travelers notice that some of their holy sites are considered holy by member of other religions as well. For Christians and Jews (and to a lesser extent Muslims) there is a certain amount of vindication in other faiths' attaching value to their holy places. Seeing different religions drawn to the same location somehow proves that the places have an intrinsic holiness, a holiness so strong that it can be felt by others.

For the most part, Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta are oblivious to Jews but aware of the basics of Christian belief and practice. Ibn Jubayr actually traveled together with Christian pilgrims and watched them worship.

For most, but not all, of the Christian travelers, the specifics of Muslim worship are a mystery. Still, Muslim veneration of Christian holy sites produces a kind of triumphalism among Christian pilgrims. On the one hand, Muslims are infidels, destroyers of the holy sites (and just about every traveler notices Christian holy places destroyed by Muslims). On the other hand, their veneration of some of these sites serves to reinforce, if not actually validate, Christian belief. (The unspoken but likely explanation for this appreciation of the enemy is that

if a shrine affects even the unbelievers, it must be truly significant.)³⁰ Jewish travelers notice Muslim and Christian appropriation of their sites with a similar mixture of despair and satisfaction.

Burchard mentions that Muslims visit a place they identify as Joshua's tomb.³¹ Though Christians do not locate the grave at the same place, the respect for a Biblical figure does not go unnoticed. Poloner remarks on the same phenomenon.³²

Burchard also likes to let his reader know that the sites he visits are of interest to Muslims as well, so that his visit to the tomb of Lazarus is capped with the observation that "the Saracens greatly honor this sepulcher because of the miracle of the resurrection which the Lord wrought there."³³ Also, Burchard sees that the earth from which Adam was created is as valuable to Muslims as to Christians. In fact, "the Saracens carry this earth on the backs of camels to Egypt, Ethiopia, India and other places, and sell it for a very precious spice."³⁴ He

³⁰ This holds true not just for Muslims, but pagans as well. Theodosius in 530 mentions former cannibals who now sit out to receive Christian pilgrims. Theodosius, On the Topography of the Holy Land, trans. J.H. Bernard, PPTS, vol.2, p.12

³¹ Burchard, p.17.

³² Poloner, p.33.

³³ Burchard, p.64.

³⁴ Burchard, p.92.

reports that watching the Christian pilgrims at prayer "moves many even of the Saracens to tears."³⁵

Ludolph von Suchem tells of some village weavers "who weave mats wondrous well in divers fashions and with most curious skill"³⁶ and are careful to keep lighted the grotto where St. John the Baptist is said to have been beheaded. He explains that "they firmly believe and say that it has been proved by experience that if they did not hold the church in such great respect, and were to leave it unlighted for one night, rats would come forth from the ground and would pull to pieces and spoil all their matwork"³⁷

Ludolph visits Sinai to see the bones of St. Catherine. These bones are said to produce a miraculous oil, which is distributed to pilgrims.³⁸ Muslims are impressed by the miraculous qualities of the oil too, from the guides and camel-drivers, to the Sultan, who gives financial support to the monastery there. Muslims also respect the Minorite friars in Jerusalem, but for their hospitality, not their religious abilities. "Foreign merchants, even Saracens, praised them much, for

³⁵ Burchard, p.3.

³⁶ Ludolph, p.46.

³⁷ Ludolph, p.47, might not have accepted this kind of superstition among Christians.

³⁸ St. Catherine is hardly unique this way - other saints were also said to produce oil. Examples?

they did good offices to all men."³⁹ Apparently the hospitality and food were good. In general, monks seem to have been in good standing with the Muslim authorities. At Quarentena a Georgian monastery stands on the place where Jesus fasted. "In my time the King of Gazara caused the road to be broken, so that the monks could not get down nor pilgrims get up, but when the Soldan heard of this he had the road well repaired, and granted leave to the monks to dwell there for ever."⁴⁰ The monks and nuns at Seyr were also "in my time always in especial grace and favor with the Soldan, who did them much good."⁴¹

John Poloner also points out Muslim veneration of sites if they are also Christian ones, so that he notices unusual elements at a church on the Mount of Olives. "In this same chapel the Saracens offer devout prayers, and have a stone in the same. Moreover, they have written over the door of the same chapel in red letters of their alphabet, 'I am the door of Mercy.'"⁴²

Benjamin of Tudela also looks to inscriptions in locating the tomb of Ezekiel and Jechoniah. The tomb is a library and pilgrimage site for Jews, where continuity is represented by texts as well as tombs. "A large house belonging to the sanctuary is filled with books, some of them from

³⁹ Ludolph, p. 102.

⁴⁰ Ludolph, p.115. I cannot identify the King of Gazara.

⁴¹ Ludolph, p.134.

⁴² Poloner, p.9.

the time of the first temple, and some from the time of the second temple, and he who has no sons consecrates his books to its use."⁴³ But Benjamin adds another interesting fact - that Muslims too venerate the tomb of Ezekiel. "Distinguished Mohammedans also come hither to pray, so great is their love for Ezekiel the Prophet; and they call it Bar (Dar) Melicha (the Dwelling of Beauty). All the Arabs come here to pray...and even at times of disturbance no man would dare touch the Mohammedan or Jewish servants who attend at the sepulcher of Ezekiel."⁴⁴ Jacob the emissary of rabbi Yehiel of Paris remarks in the mid-thirteenth century only that over Ezekeil's grave is a synagogue "more beautiful than the eye of man has ever seen"⁴⁵ but does not mention any Muslim veneration of the site.

According to Benjamin of Tudela, Muslims are similarly respectful of Ezra's tomb. Benjamin explains how Ezra came to be buried in Persia - he "went forth from Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes, and died there. In front of his sepulcher is a large synagogue. And at the side thereof the Mohammedans erected a house of prayer out of their great love and veneration for him, and they like the Jews on that account. And the Mohammedans come hither to pray."⁴⁶

⁴³ Signer, p104, Eisenstein, p.34.

⁴⁴ Signer, pp.104-105, Eisenstein, p.34.find some Muslim source.

⁴⁵ Adler, p.128, Eisenstein, p.71.

⁴⁶ Signer, p.108, Eisenstein, p.36. get EI on Uzayr

Jacob ha Cohen notices non-Jews venerating sites that are holy to Jews. At the grave of Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai⁴⁷ "people of all nations kindle lights there, and sick and barren come there and are healed."⁴⁸

Jacob the Emissary points out a number of Jewish sites treated with respect by Muslims. At the site of Elijah's altar "is a building where the Moslems kindle lights to the glory of that place."⁴⁹ In the village of Avarata, there are two mosques near Jewish graves. At Siloam, "It is said that the waters heal the sick and, therefore, the Moslems bathe there."⁵⁰

This phenomenon is of course most obvious in Jerusalem itself. "Round the *Eben Shethia*, the Ishmaelite Kings have built a very beautiful building for a house of prayer and erected on the top a very fine cupola. The building is on the site of the Holy of Holies and the Sanctuary, and in front of the Mosque towards the Altar is a structure of pillars and the cupola is at the top of these pillars and it would seem that this was the place of the outer Altar which was in the Court of Israel. The Moslems gather there on their holy day [he transliterates the Arabic 'id

⁴⁷ get EJ on ben Zakkai

⁴⁸ Adler, p.95, Eisenstein, p.60.

⁴⁹ Adler, p.116, Eisenstein, p.66 uses *qedushat ha-makom* - 'the holiness of the place'.

⁵⁰ Adler, p.117, Eisenstein, p.67.

rather than using a Hebrew equivalent] in crowds and dance around it in procession as the Israelites used to do on the seventh day of the festivals, if we may compare holy things with profane."⁵¹ He is quite willing to admire the architecture, if not the ritual. There is a mosque at the grave of Samuel , and also at the graves of Jonah and Jethro, because, as Jacob the emissary explains, "it is the custom of the Moslems to make their prayer houses upon the graves of the righteous."⁵² Jacob may recognize that sometimes the different religions disagree about who is buried in a certain place. He writes that on the grave of Rabbi Gamliel "there is a fine cupola and it is a prayer house for the Moslems, a fine building which they call Abuhadira."⁵³ Actually, they venerated it as the grave of the traditionalist Abu Hurayra.⁵⁴

Isaac Chelo also tells an unusual story about some Jewish graves at Alma. "Every Friday evening lights are lit on these tombs by the Jews and Mussulmans. Now it happened one Friday evening that the number of lights was so great their flames set on fire one of these trees, the pomegranate overhanging the tomb of Rabbi Eleazar, son of Arach. Everyone refused to extinguish the flames: the Jews in order not to profane the Sabbath, the Ishmaelites in imitation of the Jews. The

⁵¹ Adler, pp.118-19, Eisenstein, p.67.

⁵² Adler, p.125, Eisenstein, pp.69-70.

⁵³ Adler, pp.125-126, Eisenstein, p.70.

⁵⁴ get EI on Abu Hurayra. It is very possible that the *resh* was read as a *dalet*.

tree burnt, therefore, the whole night through, and on the morrow they came to visit the sacred tomb it was seen with astonishment that neither the trunk nor the branches of this tree had received any hurt. It was a miracle to behold, as has been written."⁵⁵

Meshullam observes that even Muslims throw stones when they pass Absalom's monument because he rebelled against his father David.⁵⁶ In fact, David gets respect from Christians - Meshullam specifies that they are Franciscans - and Muslims, who care for they key to the tomb and come to pray there. After listing a few more of the graves in the Jerusalem area, he comments that "we see that the Moslems also honor all these places and that they have the same traditions about them as we. They ask the Jews 'Why do you not go to the grave of such a saint or such a prophet?' The Moslems have many a time sought to have these graves closed up and to have them dedicated as *wakuf* [Hebrew, *le-hahzik bahem bi-qedushah*, Meshullam does not use the word *waqf*] in their hands, but God has opposed their intention and would not listen to them, for the keeper of Israel neither sleepeth nor slumbereth."⁵⁷ But the sense of shared patrimony remains, "and the Moslems call the whole surroundings of

⁵⁵ Adler, p.150. Eisenstein p.79 n.7 notes that a MS of stories tells this in the name of one R. Yosi. This too may have been part of Chelo's preparatory reading/baggage.

⁵⁶ Adler, p.192, Eisenstein, p.100.

Jerusalem and Mount Zion *Al-Quds*, that is, 'the Holy', since they call all this region the Holy Land."⁵⁸

At Rachel's tomb, notes Meshullam, "the Moslems have placed above her grave four pillars and an arch above. They honor her and both Jews and Moslems pray there."⁵⁹

Muslims and Christians alike venerated Mary and so not surprisingly places associated with her life became shared shrines.⁶⁰ Marino Sanudo tells of an interesting miracle - women who drink water mixed with earth from near the stone where some of Mary's milk fell will get back their own milk.⁶¹

Muslims and Christians both bathe at the fountain where Mary is said to have washed the swaddling clothes of Jesus.

Unlike some sites, the fountain in Nazereth from which Mary used to draw water goes unremarked, according to Ludolph von Suchem. It may be that the fountain was the only water source in the

⁵⁷ Adler, p.194. Eisenstein, p.101.

⁵⁸ Eisenstein, p.102, my translation

⁵⁹ Adler, pp.188-89.

⁶⁰ See Q23:50 "And We made the son of Mary and his mother a sign, and gave them shelter on an elevated ground, sequestered, watered by a spring." Also, A.J. Wensinck, "Maryam" in EI.

⁶¹ Sanudo, p.54.

town in which case the fact that tanners were using it was more an expression of practical need than theological rebuke.

Sometimes shared shrines create geographical havoc. Benjamin of Tudela gives one such example. "When the Christians captured Ramlah, the Ramah of old, from the Mohammedans, they found there the grave of Samuel the Ramathite, close to a Jewish synagogue. The Christians took the remains, conveyed them unto Shiloh, and erected over them a large church..."⁶² This also explains why Samuel's body is in Shiloh, and not Ramah, as would be expected from the biblical account.⁶³

Hebron, Jerusalem and Mecca

All of these are minor sites compared to the major shared shrines of Jerusalem and Hebron. Here, the shared heritage of Jews, Christians, Muslims overlaps most intensely. But for pilgrims, this does not necessarily mean that the holy sites in these cities are protected by miracles. Quite the opposite, in fact. There are relatively few

⁶² Signer, p.87, Eisenstein, p.28.

⁶³ According to I Samuel 28:3, Samuel was buried in his hometown of Rama and indeed most Jewish travelers say they visited the site near Jerusalem, not in Shiloh. For example, Samuel ben Samson sees the grave of Samuel at Rama. Adler, p.105, Eisenstein, p.63.

supernatural events recorded by medieval travelers at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem or at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

The city of Hebron, where Abraham was buried, was, as we discussed at the beginning of this study, an important stop for Jewish, Christian, and Muslim pilgrims. Depending on who was in control, access for pilgrims of other religions could be difficult. At the end of the fifteenth century, when the area was ruled by the Mamluks, Felix Fabri and other members of his German tour group had a difficult time convincing their guides to bring them to Hebron. The guides had wanted to bypass the city to save time. Even though Fabri had insisted that the visit to Hebron be put into the contracted itinerary, it took a "violent outcry" by the pilgrims to get them there. When the group did arrive in Hebron, crowds came out to see them because, according to Fabri, there had not been any Latin Christian pilgrims in Hebron in years.⁶⁴

Benjamin of Tudela traveled between the first and second crusades and provides a glimpse of what Hebron was like at the time. First he points out the ruined old city and the position of the new one. Hebron was not heavily built up in the twelfth century, a situation which Benjamin attributes to religious motives. "Beyond the field of Machpelah is the house of Abraham; there is a well in front of the house, but out of

⁶⁴ Fabri, vol.9, pp.407-416.

reverence for the Patriarch Abraham no one is allowed to build in the neighborhood."⁶⁵

Benjamin tells how the Christian inhabitants of Hebron have overtaken a Jewish site. "Here there is the great church called St. Abram, and this was a Jewish place of worship at the time of the Mohammedan rule, but the gentiles [Hebrew *goyim*] have erected there six tombs, respectively called those of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah."⁶⁶ It is not clear if Benjamin considered this a holy site for Muslims as well. He uses the term *goyim* for non-Jews without specifying Christians or Muslims. Benjamin does point out that the place is still special for Jews, joining past and present. "One finds there many casks filled with the bones of Israelites, as the members of the house of Israel were wont to bring the bones of their fathers thither and to deposit them there to this day."⁶⁷

Benjamin needed to bribe a guard to get into a subterranean chamber which is the real burial place of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob and Leah. As he explains, most visitors are fooled into believing that the newly-labeled graves at ground level are authentic. "The custodians tell the pilgrims that these are the tombs of the Patriarchs, for which information the pilgrims give them money. If a Jew

⁶⁵ Signer, p.87, Eisenstein, p.28.

⁶⁶ Signer, p.86, Eisenstein, p.28.

comes, however, and gives a special reward, the custodian opens unto him a gate of iron, which was constructed in the days of our forefathers, and then he is able to descend below by means of steps, holding a lighted candle in his hand."⁶⁸ Eventually the persistent pilgrim will find the graves, with names marked in stone. Benjamin uses these engravings as proof of the authenticity of his observations. Samuel ben Samson, traveling in 1210, about thirty years after Benjamin, has a similar story. He and two fellow travelers got the gatekeeper to let them sneak in during the middle of the night.⁶⁹ Jacob ha Cohen also visited Hebron when it was under Crusader rule and he had to disguise himself as a Christian to gain access.⁷⁰

In the later Muslim dynasties as well, open access for Jews was not always possible. Meshullam of Volterra, who went to pray at the tomb, at the end of the fifteenth century, reports that the Jewish community is small and that his information about the graves of Abraham and Sarah comes from Jewish women who put on veils to go unnoticed into the mosque built above the tombs. Passing as Muslims, they are able to pray at the holy graves. The men have to be content standing outside a small window. Meshullam is impressed by the

⁶⁷ Signer, p.87, Eisenstein, p.28.

⁶⁸ Signer, p.86. Eisenstein, p.28. The Hebrew for pilgrims here is *to'im*, mistaken ones, a common epithet for Christians.

⁶⁹ Adler, p.105, Eisenstein, p.63.

respect that Muslims show to their own holy sites and feels that they may even be outdoing the Jews at their own game. They honor the graves at Hebron greatly, having built atop them a mosque "as is their custom", and they give a great deal of charity in honor of those who are buried there.⁷¹

Meshullam alludes to the *waqf* that supports the area. The protected status of the real estate was probably responsible for the lack of new construction. According to the local Jewish women, "the cave derives income from the lands near the cave and owns vineyards and olives and houses too numerous to count which the Moslems give for their dead to atone for them..."⁷²

Despite difficulties, only two of the Jewish travelers mention any miracles associated with the Tomb of the Patriarchs. The miracle in one case seems designed to keep away Jews as well as non-Jews. Petahia of Ratisbon, traveling at about the same time as Benjamin of Tudela, while crusaders ruled Hebron, says that it was the Jews of Acre who told him to pay to get to the lower level of the cave. But whereas Benjamin

⁷⁰ The story was discussed above on p.180.

⁷¹ Adler, p.185, Eisenstein, p.98.

⁷² Adler, p.186, Eisenstein, p.98. The *waqf* at Hebron was well-endowed, as travelers mention through the medieval period. See F.E. Peters, Jerusalem: The Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginnings of Modern Times, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, pp.240-241 and 385-387.

went down with a candle, Petahia could not keep a candle lighted because of a strong wind. Over the mouth of the lower cave are "very thick iron bars, the like no man can make by earthly means but with heavenly help only. And a storm-wind blows from between the holes and bar and bar...Whenever he bent towards the mouth of the cave a storm-wind went forth and cast him backwards."⁷³ Jacob ha Cohen attributes a strong wind with protecting the bodies of the Patriarchs. His story is more sectarian than Petahia's in that the wind only prevents access by Christians.

Christian pilgrims found their access to the tombs restricted in more conventional ways when Hebron was under Muslim rule, but at least they visited the city. According to the English Saewulf, in 1102, "Hebron, very great and very beautiful as it was, is now devastated by the Saracens."⁷⁴ He does not necessarily mention miracles, but believes that the scent of the place comes from the spices in which the Patriarchs and their wives were embalmed. Also, he believes that a tree under which Abraham stood is still living.⁷⁵ Abbott Daniel, about five years after Saewulf, does not mention whether Muslims or Jews have any attachment to the place. Though he finds the area extremely fertile

⁷³ Adler, p.90, Eisenstein, p.56.

⁷⁴ Saewulf, p.24.

⁷⁵ Saewulf, p.48.

and considers the mosque “ingeniously built”, he does not see anything miraculous in the place.⁷⁶

Ludolph von Suchem, writing in the middle of the fourteenth century, also had a hard time entering the tombs but did not attribute miracles to the site. He comments that the city is “still tolerably populous.” He must have expected to find it in ruins. Like earlier travelers, he notes that there is a mosque above the tombs. “This church is held especially sacred by Saracens, and they will not suffer any Christian to enter it, but let them pray at the door. They suffer Jews to enter, which in my time they paid money to do.”⁷⁷ About a hundred and thirty years later, Felix Fabri reports that he and his fellow travelers were only allowed as far as the steps of the mosque.⁷⁸

Muslims did not even get that far when crusaders ruled the area. Ibn Jubayr has nothing to say about Hebron, which he probably could not have visited at all. Ibn Battuta, in the fourteenth century, was able to make the trip, the *ziyara*, to Hebron. He descends into the cave a number of times and, like Benjamin of Tudela, believes that the real tombs are far below ground and that most tourists are shown false ones. He says that at one point there was a passageway to the real graves but that now it is stopped up. To supplement his description of Hebron, he

⁷⁶ Daniel, p.45.

⁷⁷ Ludolph, p.92.

quotes what is apparently a guidebook for Muslim visitors to the city, Ali b. Ja'far al-Razi's *Al Mufsir lil-Qulub 'an sihhat qabr Ibrahim was 'ishaq wa-Ya'qub* [The Unveiler to the Hearts of the Genuineness of the Tomb of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob].⁷⁹ Ibn Battuta does not mention any other religions having an interest in Hebron, though this does not necessarily mean that he was unaware of them. Ibn Battuta has only one miracle to report. He mentions a local tradition that the mosque there was built by *jinn* at the command of King Solomon.⁸⁰ This echoes Petahia's insistence that the tombs are closed in by supernatural structures.

But by and large, Hebron is a city without miracles. Jerusalem also has only a few supernatural events for medieval travelers. The few miracles that do happen are almost always at sites away from the Temple Mount, the *haram al-sharif*, itself.

Samuel ben Samson and his tour group reclaim through ritual a spot on the Mount of Olives where the Ark of the Covenant once rested.

⁷⁸ Fabri, vol.9, p.416.

⁷⁹ Gibb, vol.1, p.74, n.20 does not know the identity of this author or his book. Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, pp.115-16.

⁸⁰ Gibb vol. 1, pp.73-4, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.115. Muqaddasi made the same point in the tenth century. Peters, *Jerusalem*, p.240. Also See J. Walker, "Sulaiman b.Dawud" and D.B. Macdonald, "Djinn" in EI. Q34:12-13 relates that Solomon had the *jinn* work building him religious structures.

"On the Sabbath day we recited the afternoon prayer on the spot where the uncircumcised had time and again set up a sanctuary with idols, whose presence the place would not endure, causing them to fall down again as fast as they were set up. It was one of the ten stations visited by the divine Majesty when he came (to earth) from His dwelling-place. The Ishmaelites venerate this spot."⁸¹ Here, the earth itself rejects Christian worship, and the strict monotheism of Islam recognizes the miracle.

A similar story takes place on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, according to Petahia of Ratisbon, at the end of the twelfth century. He tells a common story that a Jew told the first Muslim conquerors about the exact location of the Temple Mount. He continues that the Muslims built a "beautiful structure consisting of red, green, and variegated marble. Then came gentiles [Hebrew, *goyim* but clearly referring to Christians] and put images in it, but they fell down. They then fixed the images in the thickness of the wall, but in the Holy of Holies they could not place any."⁸²

It is interesting, just as an aside, to see that in the twelfth century, Ibn Jubayr rejects a similar story about Mecca. The threshold of one of the city gates is made of three large stones. Ibn Jubayr was

⁸¹ Adler, p.104. Eisenstein p.64 n.7 points out that Eusebius mentions a church built by Constantine that was already destroyed by the time of Samuel.

told that these stones were once idols worshipped by the Meccans in the pre-Islamic period. Now that the idols have been incorporated into paving stones, the Muslims step on the idols as they walk to their worship. Ibn Jubayr rejects the poetic image of triumphant monotheism for a more pragmatic, and likely, explanation. "The truth concerning these stones is that on the day of the taking of Mecca, the Prophet - may God bless and preserve him - directed that the idols be broken and burnt, and that those shown to us are not authentic. These at the door are merely transported stones and are likened to the idols only because of their size."⁸³

The down-to-earth tone that Ibn Jubayr takes in Mecca is common to almost all visitors to Jerusalem. One exception is Saewulf, at the beginning of the twelfth century. He sees a city full of miracles, but all date back to the Biblical period. None involve Muslim rulers.

Muslim, Christian and Jewish visitors to Jerusalem all focus on the Temple Mount. Petahia's story is the exception to the rule. As we saw much earlier, Petahia's account was apparently edited to meet the tastes of a readership eager for stories of relics and miracles. Benjamin of Tudela, roughly contemporary with Petahia, tells a different story. In Jerusalem, Benjamin seems to be aware for the first time of

⁸² Adler, p.89, Eisenstein, p.56.

⁸³ Broadhurst, p.109, Nassar, p.128.

other religions' holy places in the Holy Land. "In Jerusalem is the great church called the Sepulcher, and here is the burial place of Jesus, unto which the Christians make pilgrimages...Upon the site of the sanctuary Omar ben al Khataab erected an edifice with a very large and magnificent cupola, into which the gentiles do not bring any image or effigy, but they merely come there to pray."⁸⁴ This report on the mosque seems to be in a relieved tone of voice. There is no indication that Benjamin went into either of the two places he describes.

Ludolph von Suchem appreciates Muslim deference on the Temple Mount. "The Saracens pay the greatest reverence to the Lord's Temple, keeping it exceeding clean both within and without, and all alike entering it unshod."⁸⁵ He does not seem to know that this is the same treatment they give to all mosques.

Meshullam of Volterra sees Muslim rule in Jerusalem as it affects Jewish holy sites and cemeteries. However, he does not denigrate Muslim buildings. The Gates of Mercy, to the east of the Temple Mount "are closed and on the sides of the gates are Moslem graves. Opposite this is the site of the Temple of Solomon and a Moslem building upon it. The huge stones in this building are a wondrous matter, and it is difficult to believe how the strength of man

⁸⁴ Signer, p.83, Eisenstein, p.26. Here again Benjamin uses the generic term *goyim*, but obviously refers to Muslims.

could have moved them into their present position...On the western side of the pavement there is a place about three fingers high which is said to be the *Eben Shethiah*, and there is a great cupola beautifully gilded, about twenty or perhaps thirty cubits square. It is very high, and the Ishmaelites have covered it with lead, and they say that this is doubtless the Holy of Holies."⁸⁶ Meshullam explains that Muslims treat it with great respect, bathing five times and abstaining from sexual relations for three days before going to the site.⁸⁷ But although the Temple Mount is in Muslim hands, it still retains its holiness and the memory of its original Jewish sanctity. Every year on the ninth of Av, the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple, "all the lamps in the Temple Court go out of their own accord, and cannot be kindled again, and the Moslems know when it is the 9th of Ab, which they observe somewhat like the Jews because of this. This is clear and known to everyone without any doubt."⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ludolph, p.98.

⁸⁶ Adler, p.190, Eisenstein, p.100.

⁸⁷ I know of no such practice. The closest one sees to this is that a number of pilgrims visited Jerusalem and entered the state of *ihram* there before continuing on to Mecca, although this was documented in the Umayyad and early Abbasid eras, well before the life of Meshullam of Volterra. Elad, "Medieval Jerusalem"pp.62-65.

⁸⁸ Adler, p.190, Eisenstein, p.100.

No such tradition was clear to Ibn Battuta, who marvels at the beauty and workmanship of the Dome of the Rock but makes no mention of the site's being holy to anyone other than Muslims.

And what about Mecca? What kinds of miracles do the travelers find there? The answer seems to be, hardly any.

Both Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta report that the Black Stone is unusually soft. Pilgrims traditionally kiss it, and Ibn Jubayr writes that the stone "when kissed, has a softness and moistness which so enchants the mouth that he who puts his lips to it would wish them never to be removed."⁸⁹ Ibn Battuta's report is almost identical.⁹⁰

Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta both say that the Haram manages to contain everyone who comes to pray there, and that the place is never completely empty of worshippers.⁹¹ Both miracles allude to some kind of symbiotic relationship between the place and the Muslims who make the *hajj*. One may see perhaps a more attenuated version of this in the miracles of the Meccan economy. Ibn Battuta explains that even though the city itself is not fertile, all kinds of delicacies are imported and

⁸⁹ Broadhurst, p.85, Nassar, p.101.

⁹⁰ Gibb, vol.1, p.197, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1,p.314.

⁹¹ Broadhurst, p.95,Nassar, p.112, and Gibb, vol.1, p.196, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.311. A Jewish parallel can be found in the Mishna. According to Avot 5:5 one of the ten miracles at the temple was that no one ever felt crowded in Jerusalem during the pilgrimage.

available.⁹² Ibn Jubayr is particularly inclined to think of the city's commercial activity as miraculous.⁹³ For both visitors, the economic side effects of pilgrimage are incorporated into the virtues of the place.

The holiness of the place is such that it alters animal behavior. Pigeons never come to roost on the Ka'ba itself. Its holiness protects its airspace. As Ibn Battuta tells it, "the pigeons of Mecca, in spite of their numbers, and other kinds of birds as well, do not alight upon it, nor do they pass over it in their flight. You can see pigeons flying over the whole sanctuary, but when they come level with the illustrious Ka'ba they deflect their course from it to one side, and do not pass over it. It is said that no bird ever alights on it unless it be suffering from some disease, and in that case it either dies on the instant or is healed of its disease..."⁹⁴

When the people of Mecca find themselves facing famine (and the consequent rising prices, according to Ibn Jubayr) they turn to one particular relic - the Qur'an of Zayd ibn Thabit, Muhammad's head secretary and redactor in chief of the official authorized Qur'an

⁹² Gibb, vol.1, 191, and n.13 there cites Q14:37 in which Abraham prays for precisely such a situation. Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.304.

⁹³ Broadhurst, pp.116-120, Nassar pp.138-144.

⁹⁴ Gibb, vol.1, p.197, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p.312. Ibn Jubayr, from whom Ibn Battuta must have copied this, says that the information about sick birds being instantly healed or killed was written in a book about Mecca. Broadhurst, p.95, Nassar, p.112.

commissioned by the caliph 'Uthman. Meccans pray near this open volume for the relief of their suffering, and according to both Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta, their prayers are answered before they even leave the Haram.⁹⁵ Though neither traveler saw this, both report on it as a well-known local custom. Only a highly textualized society would have a first edition as a relic.

One ends up with the feeling that the travelers were not looking for miracles and did not expect the very holiest sites to enforce their own boundaries. Only lesser shrines, generally under the political power of infidels, are protected in this way. Skeptics can say that the more popular sites are visited by many people so the story of a miracle could not be invented. But the situation shows something about expectations. Major holy sites do not need to prove themselves. Their value and their ownership are self-evident to the interested parties.

⁹⁵ Broadhurst, p.100, Nassar, p.118; Gibb, vol.1, pp.200-01, Defrémery and Sanguinetti, vol.1, p320.

CONCLUSIONS

Religious travel of the later Middle Ages produced a self-conscious body of literature. Travelers knew that they were re-interpreting the visual world of the holy places for people who had heard or read about them. They tried, where possible, to convey a sense of what it actually felt like to be in sacred places. Sometimes they invited readers to visualize the scenery. They also invited readers to help them make sense of the information they had worked so hard to gather, both before and during the voyage.

But as much as the authors assumed that their books would be read interactively, they remained firmly in control by editing and shaping the narrative - and by reminding the reader that he was only getting the information that had been pre-selected for him. No matter how detailed the picture, it was always a partial view. No book could replicate the experience, and no author would consider trying.

This is the paradox of the religious travel account. Holy books encouraged the trip, and readings created expectations. But some people could not be satisfied by second-hand accounts. They needed to see for themselves, to have a sensory experience of the holy places. For the most part, this trip was religiously encouraged, or even mandated.

On some level, the pilgrims were looking more for affirmation of the old than information about the new. They had read other books and knew, more or less, what they would find. What they wanted to know - even if they did not say so directly - was how they, as individual people, would be affected by the holy sites and how the holy places would affect them. But as soon as they had visited the holy places, made the pilgrimage, and felt the connection to the spiritual, they had no way of replicating the experience except to write.

They already knew that writing could not convey reality. Writing never does. But there was no other way. So they wrote and laid their writings humbly at the feet of future travelers.

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